■ ENTERTAINMENT
'I was a virgin till I was 17,' MIG Ayesa talks of sex

■ BUSINESS/B1
Chair of banking giant HSBC has high hopes for RP economy

■ NEWS/A9
'Maximo Oliveros' wins Grand Prize in Asian fest of first films in Singapore

■ BUSINESS/B1
OFW earnings projected to hit $10.3B for '05 still main growth driver

This councilor wants to ban 'quickies' in QC

By CJ Yap

MORONI 'QUICKIES' IN Reverse Day?

A councilor wants to ban "short-time" in motels mirror-in hopes of putting a stop to prostitution and

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

First female Ombudsman faces three big test cases

By Christine O. Avendaño and TJ Burgonio

OUTSTRECZ

THE FIRST FEMALE OM- mous ombudsman had fighting words as she prepared to take on the job.

"I'm telling you that no

Thursday, December 1, 2005 ▲ 28 pages ▲ vol. 29 ▲ no. 334

website: www.inq7.net

Thais claim RP cheating

Thaksin can't believe SEAG results; to raise fair play in summit

THAILAND IS TAKING the luster out of the Philippine triumphs in the Southeast Asian Games, accusing the host nation of "cheating" and prompting Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra to suggest a summit meeting to discuss fair play in sports.

Robert Aventajado, chair of the Philippine Olympic Committee, dismissed the accusation.

"All countries are represented in the group of referees and in all aspects of the games," said Aventajado. "We are doing it by the book and we follow the standards."

Jacob Arevejakasan, secretary general of Thailand's Olympic Committee, which oversees international competition, complained yesterday that the Philippines had robbed Thai competitors out of victories in several sports, including boxing, gymnastics and badminton.

"It's hard to win at the Games since the hosts are cheating," Jacob told reporters, conceding that the Thai team would not be able to raise its targeted 110 to 116 gold medals.

Thailand indicated that the Philippines had made accumulating gold medals a greater priority than upholding the sporting spirit at the 23rd staging of the biennial event, leading to "flaw" participants losing out in unfair scoring.

"Normally I have no time to watch sports but I often watched these Games and kept thinking 'why do results turn out to be that way?' I don't know what to say," he told reporters yesterday.

"I have been following the SEA Games closely and believe that the SEA Games Center should take to help achieve fair play standards," Thaksin said. "It should not be about winning gold medals."

Full story, Page A14

DIVING is one the highpoints of the diving competition in Tram Rapatsa Center in Subic Bay, Zambales. Pamela Mae Perez emerges with three gold medals belonging the Philippines' SEA Games treasure trove to 58 golds.

RP'S BEST HOPE for the women's All-Around Gymnastics finals, Cecilia Cristina Salanio, fractures her left foot following a bad fall on Wednesday. Her coach Liliosa Loreto rushes to her side while she couldn't stop the tears for the pain and the sound of hopes dashed on the ground.

Davao girl SEAG's 1st triple gold medalist

By Ray Luarca

SHEILA MAE PEREZ DIDN'T cheat for coins. She chose for gold.

The 5-foot-1 discovery from the Davao City pier capped the country's 1-6 swingboard on her final attempt yesterday to become the 23rd Southeast Asian Games' first triple-gold medalist and push the Philippines further away from its pursuers in the medal race.

Cutting a warrior of gook from wushu, bowling, wrestling, boxing, swimming, fencing, billiards, taekwondo and track and field, the Filipinos boosted their medal haul to 58 after Day 6 of the biennial meet which will run up to Dec. 5.

Games shortstop to Sports, Page A24

Triangle, '168' eating into mall sales

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

MERCHANTS ARE FEELING THE brunt of the economic crunch, as Filipino consumers hold back on spending in the face of the rising cost of living.

The retail business has become so poor that even well-heeled consumers are resorting to window shopping in search for bargains to escape at flea markets usually run by mainland Chinese traders.

Roberto Chanlin, Philippine Retailers Association vice president, said the buzzword for the November was "particularly terrible" mainly for peddlers of clothes, appliances and food items as industry sales dropped between 15 percent and 50 percent from year-ago levels.

The meager business has become so big that an entire building

WORLD AIDS DAY

Deadly silence shrouds HIV-AIDS in RP

By Ma. Cielo R Daya

"FEAR" IS THE WORD THAT best describes the situation of Filipino children affected by HIV-AIDS.

In fact, "A deafening silence" is the title of the "rapid assessment study" conducted on these children and their families.

The silence that permeates some living with HIV-AIDS (PLHA) have imposed on themselves and their children is not helping break the culture of discrimination. This silence is actually keeping many of the affected families in isolation and preventing support from reaching their world.

According to the Landmark Foundation, the children's rights organization that conducted the Unicef- and Post Foundation-assisted study, the Philippines' HIV-AIDS scenario is still under a stonewall silence.

"The silence is deadly for [children affected by HIV/AIDS]," the study said. "The majority of children of PLHA do not even know that HIV is in their lives."

This is because many women with HIV-positive husbands have not submitted to testing for reasons of fear, ignorance, powerlessness, poverty... even denial.

Once affected by HIV-AIDS, and having become aware of their situation, parents impose si-

Bishop's 'delicadeza' questioned

By Christian V. Esguerra

AGO, MANILA ARCHBISHOP Gaudencio Rosales is the growing list of influential Church leaders being assured by the beleaguered President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Besides got a PE million donation from the President upa chair a month after the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) came up with a statement that did not call for her resignation, two Church insiders told the INQUIRER.

The statement was the relaunching on Aug. 1 of the Church-owned Radio Veritas in Makati where the President was the guest of honor, according to the sources who asked both not be named.

One of the priests said Mr. Rosales had with her a check worth

Rights activist shot dead, 2nd in 2 days

By Vincent Cabreza
INQUIRER Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—A UNION LEADer and human rights activist, who was shot on Tuesday morning in Bangued, Abra, died in the hospital almost eight hours after the attack, police said.

Albert Tavudulin, 41, a member of the Department of Agrarian Reform Adjudication Board and president of the DAR Employees' Association in Abra, became the second activist in Abra in as many days. At least 72 members of left-wing groups have been reported killed since President Macapagal-Arroyo took office in 2001, according to the party-list group Bayan Muna.

Tavudulin died at 4 p.m. Tuesday, according to Manuel Lasay, national vice chair of Bayan Muna.

The victim was shot by two men riding a motorcycle on Bonifacio and Bolanchie Streets in Bangued at 8:25 a.m. He was also on a motorcycle on his way to the DAR office, said Senior Supt. Alexander Pamocho, spokesperson of the Cordillera Police Office.

Bangued police officer Hindo Dengwas was quoted in an unconfirmed News report as saying that Tavudulin was walking to work when a gunman alighted from a motorcycle and shot him.

Lasay and local human rights groups and activists had yet to establish a connection between the Tavudulin's murder and the slaying of Jose Manggaling III, a coordinator of the Bohol Mamamalaya

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
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WEATHER FORECAST

House scraps warrant, 'invites' Garci instead

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES YESTERDAY INKED THE way for the appearance of former election commissioner Virgilio Garcillano before the joint inquiry into the "Hello Garci" election scandal by temporarily setting aside the arrest warrant issued against him last August.

Instead of serving the warrant, Speaker Jose de Venecia and the chairs of the five investigating House committees decided to extend a formal invitation to Garcillano (an "invited final) and history of the terms issued in connection with the alleged wiretapped tapes" on Dec. 7.

"This will feature the defining moment. That's what we want. The whole country wants him to appear and to testify," De Venecia told a press briefing yesterday.

'Act of reciprocity'

Garcillano's counsel, Atilde Tanodbong, said they would withdraw a petition they filed with the Supreme Court to nullify the warrant, an act "an act of reciprocity."

Tanodbong accepted the letter of invitation to Garcillano signed by the chairs of the five investigating committees—public information, public order and safety, national defense and security, information and communications technology, and suffrage and electoral reforms.

"We're happy with this turn of events, especially as we have been assured that nothing would be done to embarrass the former Commissioner without his consent, over and done as every will be provided," said Tanodbong.

He said he expected the latest development to "really move things forward" so that the nation can "hear what he has if entitled to say."

"I assure the committees as well as the media that Mr. Garcillano will appear on the scheduled hearing on Dec. 7. Without being detained. I also added that I'm willing to be detained if he does not appear and I mean that," he said.

Arrest warrant will be lifted

Rep. Rodolfo Farinas, chair of the public information committee, explained that although the arrest warrant had not been formally lifted as but would require the concurrence of the plenary, "the manners he [Garcillano] appeals, communicates we will let the arrangements."

The joint committee is issuing another subpoena to Samuel Ong, the former National Bureau of Investigation deputy director who claims to be in possession of the "master tape" of the alleged conversations between Garcillano and the President.

"There is no warrant. However we are issuing a third subpoena and after that is finalized, then a summon of arrest will be issued against Ong). What's important is their appearance to the committee hearings," said Rep. Teddyboy Locsin, chair of the committee on suffrage and electoral reforms.

But Ong's lawyer yesterday said they would reject any invitation to appear at the House inquiry.

'Captive of Malacañang'

"I will not accept any subpoena from the House. I'm not authorized to accept anything from the Lower House. That's a captive of Malacañang," lawyer Rodolfoson Adaza said in a phone interview.

Adaza said that when the invitation to appear at the hearing is delivered to him, "I will tell them to look for Sammy Ong in Antilan, Imus, Imus or in Camiguin island."

Ong has not surfaced since June when he faced the press claiming that he had the original of the wiretapped conversations. He had reported earlier moreover to appear at the House inquiry because of threats on his life.

Adaza said they were considering the idea of Ong appearing instead in a parallel Senate inquiry. MORE a report from Tj Burgonio

Navy chief quits 3 months early

THE CHIEF OF THE PHILIPPINE Navy, Vice Admiral Ernesto G. Leon, the Navy Flag Officer in Command, is stepping down three months ahead of his scheduled retirement to give way to junior Navy officials a crack at his post.

Dr Leon announced yesterday that he would go on terminal leave from Monday, Dec. 5, ahead of his official retirement from active service on March 31, 2006, so he would have to go under the terms of the Military Abolition Law.

"I retired early to open up more chances for my replacements. I retired so the President will have a wider choice," he said in an interview.

The most senior of those qualified to replace Dr Leon is Vice Admiral Mateo Mayuga, the Armed Forces Inspector General who headed the military fact-finding investigation into the the "Hello Garci" election fraud scandal.

The five-person fact-finding board headed by Mayuga probed allegations that some top military officials were involved in abductor shooting since their names were mentioned in the "Hello Garci" tapes.

The board has yet to make its findings public.

Earlier, Mayuga cleared the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of any wrongdoing after it raided on Aug. 17 an opposition safe house in San Mateo, Rizal where alleged evidence of election fraud against the administration was recollected.

The new senior ranking Navy officer after Mayuga is Chief Naval Staff Rear Admiral Emerge Ita.

If Dr Leon retires as scheduled in March, Mayuga and Ity would no longer qualify as candidates. Under the rules, those promoted in the major service commands should have at least a year left in the service.

Mayuga and Ity are retiring on Dec. 9 and Dec. 30, 2006, respectively. They belong to the Philippine Military Academy Class 1975.

Dr Leon himself said that if he does not obey these rules, Mayuga and Ity would not have a crack at the post of Navy chief.

"These [Mayuga and Ity] are very senior officers. They will have a year to go [in the service]," he said.

Dr Leon said he would not be asking part in the deemed Department of Genesis' deliberations for his replacement.

"That's not my choice," he said. (Jona J. Pazzibugan)

One in 3 Pinoys wants to leave RP, says survey

ONE OUT OF EVERY THREE FILipinos wants to move to another country and consider quitter to leave the Philippines is hopeless, according to a private sector local survey.

Asked whether or not they agreed with the statement, "If it were only possible, I would migrate to another country and live there," 32 percent of respondents said "Yes."

This was a sharp increase from July when only 26 percent said they would leave abroad, according to the survey.

The survey also found that 23 percent of the 1,200 people polled agreed with the statement that "this country is hopeless," more than double the 11 percent that felt that way in July.

Seventy-four percent of the respondents said they expected life in the Philippines to get worse in the coming year, while 41 percent said they would be poorer this Christmas season than last year.

Pulse Asia conducted face-to-face interviews of 1,200 adults over age 18 nationwide. The respondents were surveyed from Oct. 21-27.

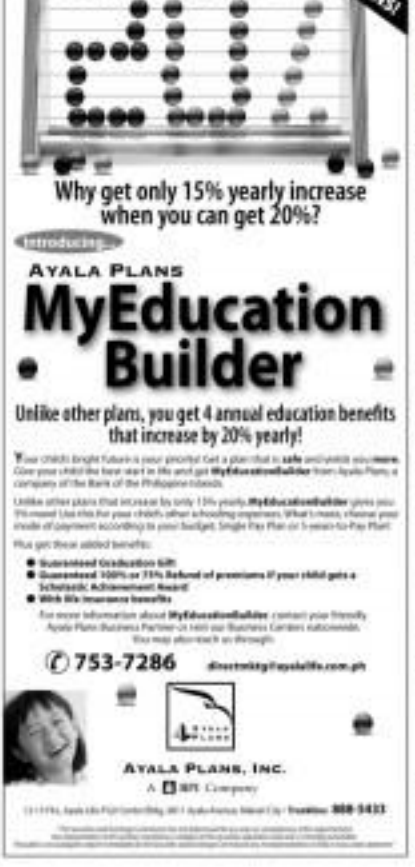
Only 16 percent of the respondents believed the coming holidays would be more prosperous than in 2004, while 40 percent thought there would be no difference.

Respondents from Mindanao were the most pessimistic about the holidays while those from the Visayas were the most optimistic.

"With price hikes coming year with hope, with apprehension, or without hope and without apprehension?" was the last of 136 items in the survey questionnaire. Pulse Asia executive director Joseph Carlos told the Inquirer.

According to Pulse Asia, about half of those who bought the country's new hopeless also wanted to migrate.

The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus six percent at the 95-percent confidence level. The survey firm endorsed the study on its own and was not commissioned by any party. *With Jamela Alcaraz, Phil Arcalas research*



House Cha-cha resolution headed for Senate archives

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

THE MOMENTUM IS STILL IN NO mood to Cha-cha. Not through a resolution, especially and definitely not Cha-Cha-Con-convoca...

"I don't think this will prosper [in the Senate]. Cha-cha cannot compete with Christmas," according to administration Sen. Ralph Recto. If at all, the House resolution could be tackled in the Senate only next year, Recto said. Congress adjourns its two weeks for the Christmas holidays.

Meanwhile administration Sen. John Arroyo said the House resolution is headed towards the Senate archive "for a much needed rest."

Other administration and opposition senators gave a lukewarm response to the House-approved resolution calling on the two houses of Congress to convene as a constituent assembly to amend or revise the 1987 Charter principally to shift from the presidential to the parliamentary system of government.

If at all, they continue to prefer Charter change through a constituent convention to be composed of elected delegates.

Senate President Franklin Drilon said the Senate resolution would be referred to the Senate committee on constitutional amendments chaired by Sen. Richard Gordon but could not say when. He said the passage of the 2006 budget, not Cha-cha, is the Senate's priority.

"My position is that I am in favor of amending the Constitution but my personal preference is that we call for a Con-con where the elected delegates will be the ones to look at the amendments to the Constitution," Drilon told reporters yesterday.

"I believe we can constitute the constitutional convention and 'con,'" Drilon added.

"It's an uphill climb in the Senate," Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan said. "At the very least the matter will be heard in the committee but realities are uncertain as to the outcome," he added.

Gordon, reached by phone in Iloilo where he is attending the World Economic Forum, said he doubts whether the Senate would give priority to the Cha-cha resolution. He also doubts the motive of Malacañang and house leaders in pushing Cha-cha.

"I want to find out if the people really want Charter change or if it is just an agenda of people with narrow questions on their mandate like Cebu President Mercedes Arroyo or those who want to be White Houses because they cannot win elections," Gordon said.

Gordon said he is for constituent assembly but would insist that the Senate and the House vote separately, not jointly as espoused by the House.

Gordon said he would try to call a committee meeting but doubts if this can be done this month.

Administration Sen. Manuel Villar said "right now, (the Senate has) no interest" in Cha-cha and that the earliest that could be taken up would be after the budget is approved around March next year.

"We're not going to take that up during the holidays. We cannot talk about that anymore because we are about to adjourn for Christmas," Villar said.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. reiterated his position that the President should first resign before a credible Cha-cha can be done.

"The stalemate between the Senate and the House over the proposal will remain for as long as the President clings to her office," Pimentel said.

Pimentel issued a statement over the weekend saying most senators may agree to constituent assembly because it is cheaper and would be composed of lawmakers who can reopen on the issues.

Opposition Sen. Aquilino Lacson said the measure is not even in the Senate priorities.

"There is no way it will be adopted by the Senate, especially within the timeline drawn by the House. Even if I'm alone in fighting Con-con, I will do it although I know no overwhelming majority of senators will not support Con-con," Lacson said.

"Con-con is clearly designed to fast track installation of De Venecia as prime minister. It will offer a graceful exit to GMA or allow her to finish her term without the risk of another impeachment to make us a nation of hate," Lacson said.

Arroyo said he would not imagine how the Senate would act informally on the House resolution for two reasons.

First is that it was narrowly passed by the House committee on constitutional amendments by a vote of 21-12, or by just one vote.

"It thereby passed by a landslide. Where is the overwhelming support in the House that Speaker De Venecia has monumentally banked on? It turns out to be a ruse," Arroyo said.

Second is that when the report was brought to the plenary, it was approved by viva voce vote.

"We are amending the Constitution which is of grave national concern, it therefore deserves the dignity of a nominal vote, not the voice vote of those who can strategically position themselves behind the 11 backbenchers on the House floor and shout the loudest," Arroyo said. He said the House leadership did not want to take chances.

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Deadly silence shrouds HIV-AIDS in RP

From page A1

lence, the study said. Even the children perpetuate the silence.

Faceless

"It is imperative that a face be put on the cause" of the Filipino children affected by HIV-AIDS, the study said in this way, it said, more people would be encouraged to help ensure a better life for these kids.

The call was made during a recent United seminar to encourage PLHs to speak on behalf of children affected by HIV-AIDS. His cue came forward. (*See some of the children's stories in the column "Human Face" in the Opinion section.*)

Of the 95 children who were the subjects of the study, three—aged 6, 8 and 9—were infected with HIV but did not know it. Most of the three are siblings. (Children may acquire the virus while they are in their mother's womb.)

In the study, the phrase "children affected by HIV" refers to those below 20 who have parents living with HIV or to children who are themselves infected.

Lanzhapon executive officer Irene T. Jeffrey said the research group was able to track down 375 HIV-affected children but only 95 agreed to answer questions.

Parental consent was needed before the children (52 boys and 43 girls) could be interviewed.

Research subjects

The purpose of the subjects made it clear to the researchers that as parents, they had the right to decide whether or not to reveal information on HIV-AIDS to their children.

Thus, the researchers did not make specific reference to HIV and AIDS during their interviews with the kids.

The questions dwelled mainly on the children's economic situation, health and nutrition, dietary attention and psycho-social issues.

Of the 95, 48 were orphans who had lost one or both parents to HIV-AIDS. Some children with living parents were in the care of relatives. Many of the orphans lived in an institution.

The children were mainly born poor families. Because the PLHs had to access to resume for alternative skills that could help them land higher-paying jobs, their earning capacity had been greatly reduced and their children were affected.

Poor health had lowered many PLHs from work they were trained for in the past. Others needed hospital care. The caregivers of the children were not always able to provide a better life for them.

Two of the three HIV-infected children in the study had shared their mother's adult-dose antiretroviral (ARV) drug.

When their mother died, they continued the adult dosage because they had no access to a pediatric formulation. As a consequence of the unsightly rashes and blisters caused by the ARV, they refused to go to school.

Fifteen percent of the affected children of school age were not in school. Almost half of them were sickly. Those with ailing parents had to take care of their younger siblings, or the parents themselves.

Double-edged sword

The study concluded that some children of PLHs indeed had to face many "life-shattering changes"—from having to stop schooling, to being sick, to being transferred to another family.

It said the preceding almost made the changes more stressful for the children.

Beyond enhancing their children about their health conditions, the PLHs think they can let the kids live as normally as possible, the study said.

"But this is a double-edged sword," it said, adding that when the life-shattering changes came, the children who had been kept in the dark were sudden. It forced to grow up fast and take on adult roles.

The burden is too sudden and too heavy, the study said.

AIDS at MTV Summit today

The 5-year Global Campaign on Children and AIDS was launched in October by United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Unicef, UNAIDS and partner organizations.

The Philippines' campaign for children and HIV-AIDS will be launched today, World AIDS Day, at the MTV Music Summit.

"The concert will allow us to reach 50,000 individuals, mostly young people, with life-saving messages armed with music and entertainment," Unicef country representative Nicholas Alipui said.

Alipui said an estimated 10,000 children in South Asia and the Pacific were living with AIDS, and some 9,300 had died of it.

There are 12,700 new infections among children under 15, he said.

Alipui noted that the number of PLHs in the Philippines was still low.

Curb stigma

"This gives us the extraordinary opportunity to act as one and to support those already affected, and to prevent more children, adolescents and their parents from being infected. We must [also] curb the stigma and discrimination," he said.

Global funding for AIDS was an estimated $6.1 billion in 2004.

The Philippines' share for the next three years is only $3.5 million. Funding is being pooled into efforts, where the AIDS epidemic has reached alarming proportions.

SENTIMENTS ON AIDS: Bandoon pipas announces the stand of the Bagos elders on the presence of the dreaded disease in their village. Being a popular tourist destination, Ilocos is vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases.

Lawmakers seek gov't subsidy in fight vs AIDS

By Philip C. Tubeza

ON THE EVE OF WORLD AIDS DAY, MEDIAN lawmakers led by Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo filed a bill that would help almost 10,000 afflicted Filipinos acquire anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs).

Ocampo and his colleagues filed House Bill No. 4537, which seeks to improve the Philippine AIDS Prevention and Control Act by, among other things, outsourcing low-priced ARVs.

"[ARVs], currently produced by various countries at low-priced generic versions, are expensive and scarce in the Philippines. We cannot include Cuba and Thailand have proven that political will and preventive measures enable states to supply citizens with much needed medications," Ocampo said.

The bill also seeks government subsidy for local pharmaceutical firms engaged in research and development and the production of generic antiretroviral and traditional drugs against AIDS.

Ocampo said that according to the latest figures, at least 9,400 Filipinos had registered themselves as living with AIDS or HIV.

He said that while the figure was small compared to other countries, the United Nations Development Program had warned that this might increase because of illegal drug use "involving shared needles."

Ocampo also warned that the Joint UN Program on HIV/AIDS had noted an "increasing trend" in the number of reported cases in the country and in the number of overseas Filipino workers living with HIV.

He said HB 4537 would address the "two major impediments" to proper AIDS health care in the country—the lack of clear and appropriate information, and the absence of devoted resources for the full implementation of the Philippine AIDS Prevention Act.

The bill blames the Catholic Church's opposition to artificial contraception for the lack of adequate public knowledge on means to control AIDS.

To help raise AIDS awareness, Ocampo and the co-authors of HB 4537—Bayan Muna Representatives Joel Tinder and Teddy Casiño, Gabriela Rep. Liza Maza, and Anakpawis Representatives Crispin Beltran and Rafael Mariano—distributed red ribbons in the House yesterday.

"Wore red ribbons as a show reminder of our solidarity in stopping AIDS in our country, and to take good care of Filipinos who are afflicted by it," Ocampo said.

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"I take no offense on being labeled as a beauty. But I do take offense that the influential people of the world have somehow degraded the true value and meaning of what a woman is. Let me tell you what she is. She is someone who gives more than she takes. She is someone who tries to look after the very people most powerless in war, social strife, the elderly and yourself. She is the one who has made a living out of caring and loving other people. So those who have opinions as to ourselves, thank you. It is a testament to the loving and caring culture of the Filipino people. And for that I am forever proud and grateful of my roots and culture."

Congratulations Precious!

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Rights activist shot dead . . .

From page A1

of the Philippines in the Ilocos and the Cordillera, in San Esteban, Ilocos Sur.

Cordillera rights group

The AP report said Tecsoladis belonged in the Alma Ilumnan Rights Advocates and Umiag, or the Cordillera Indigenous Peoples League. Both are militant groups campaigning for human rights in the upland region of the northern Philippines.

He was once a staff member of the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines.

The report quoted Bro. Jordan Rivera, Tecsoladis's colleague in the Alma Ilumnan Rights Advocates, as saying that the activist had earlier told friends that he was under surveillance by men he recognized to be police.

Another colleague of Tecsoladis, Aida Bagas, was also quoted in the report as saying that while police had no suspects, "we view this as a brutal that people who are critical of progress of the government are being killed."

Land cases?

"The attacks are [unprincipled] by unidentified gunmen, and the victims are all activists and militants in northern Luzon[,] but we cannot still make a direct connection although we have our suspicions," Lores said.

Palmeña said reports from Abra did not describe the killings as "political affiliation," as investigators are focusing their attention on his office's land cases.

Military authorities often refer to left-wing groups as fronts for communist rebels, who have waged an insurgency since the late 1960s.

In April, records of the murder of the religious Bagong Kamalayang Makabayan was killed in Angeles City in Pampanga.

Indignation rally

A little-known leader was also shot dead in nearby Tarlac by unknown gunmen after leading a strike at a sugar mill owned by the family of former President Corazon Aquino.

The Cordillera Human Rights Organization scheduled an indignation rally for Wednesday to protest Tecsoladis's killing in Ilocos.

His body lies at the Church of the Resurrection of Magsingay Aveniu here. NOEL BE AFP

This councilor wants to ban . . .

From page A2

other illicit sexual activities in Quezon City.

Short-time rates in motels "promote promiscuity and illicit sexual activities among the populace, particularly minors," Councilor Isidro Lagman Jr. said.

They also offer unfair competition to legitimate hotels, he said in the ordinance.

Lagman has proposed an ordinance penalizing hotels, motels, apartelles and other establishments that lease rooms for less than 12 hours, or so "short time" hours to help "improve public morals."

Under the legislation proposed, violators face suspension of their business license for at least two months, or a fine of P10,000, or both, at the discretion of the court.

Second-time offenders would be suspended for four months and/or fined P15,000, while third-time offenders would be fined P5,000 and their license cancelled.

To enforce the ordinance, the business permits and licensing office would have to coordinate with the city's department of public order and safety and police on the spot inspection of hotels, motels and similar establishments.

Corrections

IN THIS INQUIRER 29 issue, the editorial in the Opinion section on Page A2.0—"Will Garci talk"—misstated the year in which the last presidential election was held. The presidential election was held in May 2004—not 2005.

* * *

IN THE same issue, a photo caption in stories the Section on Page A3 misnamed the type of vehicle that figured in an accident on the South Luzon Expressway on Nov. 28. The vehicle was a bulk carrier—not a cement mixer.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors relating to the Inquirer, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, 5th floor, 40 Sheridan corner Sgt. Esguerra Aves., Mandaluyong City, fax No. (63-2) 897-8703, e-mail address: inq@inquirer.com.ph.

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SPORTS

John Teddyvic S. Melendres

Buenavista disqualified as Thais rule athletics

GOLD THAT NEVER WAS. Eduardo Buenavista breaks ahead with Boonthong Sitsong. A jury said the Filipino blocked the Thai.

By Mayong R. Castillo

THE PHILIPPINES BLEW ITS bid for the overall championship in athletics of the 22nd Southeast Asian Games but what hurt most was the disqualification of Eduardo Buenavista after winning the 5,000 meters yesterday.

Chased by a roaring crowd at the age-old Rizal Memorial Stadium, Buenavista raced wide and into the path of the rallying Thai Boonthong Sitsong in a sprinting duel in the last 50 meters across the victory.

Thailand immediately put the welcome on the protest which officials here upheld.

Buenavista's disallowance, which came after he had been in the wire-breathing in the 10,000 meters Tuesday, overshadowed the country's victory in the 4x400 meter relay courtesy of Julius Nierva, Jimmy Ang, Pit Ameriean Rashon Pereira and Lorelyn Ferrer Candelario.

The 30 quarter was in wire-to-wire style with a time of 3:09.72 that handed the country's royal gold surges to eight with only three marquee events left in the schedule.

Even a marathon victory won't prevent another overall victory for Thailand, which now has 33 golds after winning four times yesterday.

"It's a unanimous decision," said Sri Lanka's Prasad Hanik Jayawarde Wickremeratne, the tournament's technical director, as he finally announced the losses on Buenavista.

"The act of Buenavista deliberately impeded the (Thai) runner. That is the final decision."

Representatives from Singapore, Indonesia and Brunei composed the jury that made their decision in the presence of Malaysian Nikolaus, the long-time IAAF secretary-general.

Buenavista had a slim lead going into the final 150 meters and raced wide as both runners entered the final bend. Buenavista kept on glancing at the Thai and clearly blocked Boonthong when he tried the pass the Filipino.

"I feel sorry but it's part of the game," said Philippine Amateur Track and Field Association president Go Teng Kok. "We have to accept the decision of the panel."

Buenavista, who won a long-distance double

THE PHILIPPINES' 4x400M relay team bags the gold medal over Thailand, clocking 3:09.72 in the athletics competition of the 22nd SEA Games yesterday.

Country	G	S	B	Total
Philippines	33	30	43	131
Vietnam	28	33	34	133
Thailand	28	44	60	132
Malaysia	23	22	31	86
Indonesia	15	19	31	71
Myanmar	9	9	21	41
Singapore	12	12	22	46
Brunei	0	2	2	4
Laos	0	3	5	8
Cambodia	0	0	2	2
East Timor	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	**119**	**146**	**252**	**667**

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SEA Games MEDAL TALLY

and Brunei competed in the 10,000 meters and 14.78 seconds, but his disqualification gave Jimmy the official time of 14:15.06.

Filipino Julius Jimenez was elevated to second in 14:45.44, with Amnuay Tongnok of Thailand salvaging the bronze.

Ang and Candelario, who finished 1-2 in the men's 400 meters earlier, were also part of the 4x400 quartet that was upset by the Thais two years ago in Vietnam.

The Thai squad of Panjang Lorbua, Jakkarp Pipatana, Ajdet Kaiyawan and Supachi Phaichaw settled for the silver this time with a clocking of 3:10.23 with the Malaysian team of Mohd. Zahid Mohd. Zainudin, Zulkifarin Omarapin, Mohamad Jamaluddin and Azman Haji Kadiman settling for the bronze.

Thailand swiped top honors in the men's triple jump courtesy of Thanapat Pilakhong at 16.06 meters, while Adiel Dolisano won the second of three silver medals for the Philippines for the day with an effort of 15.94, the men's 200 meters and the men's pole vault.

Sandhal Sanampreeyang topped John Tenorio Mesias of Indonesia in the 200 with a time of 20.94, while Antonio Siaopoldo cleared 4.00 meters in the pole vault to join one try to remember considering Sandhal's performance.

Meanwhile, Rizalyn Bangilan, the top sailors of Bandilaan who posted an upset victory in the women's 10,000 on Monday won the last RS sailing by clinching a second in the 5,000-meter final race held at Subic.

Bangilan, who was a long-distance double in Kuala Lumpur in 1991 and the 10,000 in Vietnam two years ago, would have clocked 16 minutes and 14.78 seconds, but his disqualification gave Jimmy the official time of 14:15.06.

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Bangilan, who was a long-distance double

Turn to page 2

'That is strange behavior for a head of state,' says Miriam

By TJ Burgonio and Philip C. Tubeza

SEN. MIRIAM DEFENSOR-Santiago finds a lot odd This Prime Minister Thaksin's quarrels are the keynotes of officiating at the 23rd Southeast Asian Games.

"That is a strange behavior for a head of state, who normally is presumed to be the sole spokesperson of his country and is therefore tasked with the highest standards of diplomacy," said Santiago, chair of the committee on foreign relations.

(See story on Page A2.)

"The remarks tend to cast aspersions on the integrity of the Games without providing any clue as to the basis either in fact or in law of the statements. So it only raises relationship for no public reason," said the administration senator.

A threat

Santiago said that if Mr. Thaksin doubted the "integrity of the Games," he should order an investigation by his own prosecutors, and then "formally bring it up at the proper forum."

"But as it is right now, he is delivering nothing more than a threat. And this behavior departs notably from normal behavior of heads of state."

Santiago, however, sees no reason for the Department of Foreign Affairs to take a formal action on the matter "because that would be to dignify the unsubstantiated."

"But there should be formal inquiries made on the part of the DFA with the Thai Embassy on what seems to be the basis for these remarks so that we can avoid [somehow] of remedies if any exists," she said.

Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, vice chair of the committee on sports, said: "Maybe, he's just quite frustrated with his country's performance, and I think our athletes gave their best. They didn't want to lose in front of their countrymen. That's why they tried very hard to win golds for the country."

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr., however, said it was all right for Mr. Thaksin to voice his views.

"It's all right for Prime Minister Thaksin to do that because it's also in our national interest that the issue is clarified. And we don't mind it and the media that the athletes may see the product of [corruption] in creating of things of that kind," he said.

"In short, even without waiting for Thaksin to raise that issue, I think our own officials should [use] their own initiative try to verify if there's any ground to doubt the results of the Games here. It's not good for the nation to be supposed of having rendered harassment documents in favor of our athletes."

Show proof

House Minority leader Francis Escudero said Thaksin should show proof of cheating.

"I don't think that should be so much either in the concrete basis to support his allegation other than the fact that we are hosting," Escudero said.

"More important than the results of the Philippine sports championship developed and shown to the competition," he said.

Thais claim RP cheating; Filipinos decry allegation

From page A1

While Thaksin stopped short of naming the Philippines, he said he was disappointed by the Games and might raise the medal issue on the occasion of the December summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in Malaysia.

Summit or else...

"We may have to have an unofficial summit among Southeast Asian leaders to discuss how to uplift the spirit and standard of the games, otherwise the SEA Games will no longer be of interest for the region," he said.

It wasn't clear if he was serious about such a summit, but November hosts regularly an economic and security issues.

Hosting to win is not nice

"If the SEA Games continue to be like this, then it will become less popular because they have put a priority for medals now added spirit," the Thaksin minister said.

"It's normal to win or lose. But it's not nice if we host such Games and do this to other countries. It's against, I believe we have evolved, up-to-date skills and good sportsmanship. We should not focus only on medals and forget about having good sports," he said.

Thaksin said several competitions at these Games were not up to par, but not because anyone believes "the organizers' aims only to favor their own athletes."

But the Thai leader said it was unlikely that Thailand will file any official protest against the results.

In an official statement, the Philippine SEA Games Organizing Committee said that while the Philippines was hosting the games, the officiating for each contest was conducted by the Southeast Asian Games Federation and its panel of international referees and judges.

"There are strict regulations governing the conduct of the competitions, as laid down by the same, as well sports organizations, and violations are duly investigated, it is our understanding that no judge or referee from the competing countries figured in Sunday's matches [at the tournament said].

Can't be rigged

Eric Buhain, chair of the Philippine Games and Amusement Board and ambassador to the SEA Games, said the boxers' website [AGP] net that Thaksin should not question the Philippine performance.

"Meanwhile sports like running, swimming, boxing and water polo cannot be rigged as witnessed by the [Southeast Masters]," said Buhain.

He said the Philippines, along with the other Southeast Asian countries, did not approve Vietnam's winning haul of 158 gold medals when the emerging economic tiger hosted the previous SEA Games in 2003.

Historically, host countries, such as the Philippines—have won the overall championship in the biennial event that began in 1959 as the Southeast Asian Peninsular Games.

The Philippines has the medal race at least in 1981 and 1991, but this time is surging on top of the gold medal standings.

During a stint last month to inspect the Philippine venues, Chinkook Bureau Thai Olympic Committee chief, had expressed apprehension about Thailand's chances in the light for the overall SEA Games crown.

He said that top Thai players were skipping the Philippine event and were preparing instead for the Asian Indoor Games which Thailand was hosting next month.

Non-Filipino referees

Filipino swimmer Jet Ismaild Darrell Geisler, who defeated Thailand's Peravut Thongsuksiri in a close 7-6 encounter in the men's lightweight finals, said he could not fault the referees.

"I gave my best and I won the match fair and square," Geisler said. "I think they are just bitter because I beat their star of their [athlete]."

"It's hard to accept defeat especially if it's your best player losing to the opponent," Philippine coach Jobert Morales said. "There were no bad calls, but we couldn't do anything about them because the referee's decision is final."

International referee Cesar Moreno, the referee coordinator for the taekwondo tournament, said that all the referees were abiding by the rules to officiate fairly.

"It's hard to say that the entire Olympic are rigged because whenever the Filipinos are playing, all the referees in the field are host-[referees, and that goes for the other countries," Moreno said.

Moral booster

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said he was certain that all the athletes were doing their best and that they were judged accordingly.

"We are here on athletic festival for the most. They want two-minutes training, they have the will and determination and they were cheered by our countrymen. I believe all of these put together can inspire us to producing the results that we are seeing right now," Bunye said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has been attending some of the events to lend moral support to athletes as it held to raise the morale of the Philippine athletes.

Games a boost to diplomacy?

Relationship, engulfed in the "Hello Garci" wiretapping scandal and allegations of illegal gambling payoffs for months, has also roiled the political opponents to save table polemics at least for the duration of the games.

Ironically in the light of these suspicions, Tourism Secretary Joseph Lee Durano on Sunday said the SEA Games gave a boost to Philippine diplomacy with its neighbors.

"While the SEA Games brought in a lot of foreign guests, it is not really tourism in the traditional sense, the importance of it is in the strengthening of ties and friendships among the Southeast Asian neighbors," he said in Bacolod City.

"This is a very important activity of Southeast Asia to make sure that, as a sub-country development, we will not forget each other, we are brothers in some way," he said.

Durano was in Bacolod with Mr. Arroyo on Tuesday to greet the athletes competing in the basketball tournament.

He said that in the different SEA Games venues in the country "the Filipino spirit and enthusiasm is so high especially because the Filipino athletes are winning."

"It's a good way to end the year and the entire summer and the entire Southeast Asian nations coming together because of this," Durano said.

National unity

Bacolod Rep. Monico Puentevella said many dream by the people in the entire country could go beyond the SEA Games. He said he hoped that this would also become the "takeoff point for national unity." With reports from AP, AFP, Asia News Network, The Nation newspaper of Thailand, Karla Trivia Reyes, Christine D. Avendaño, Volt Contreras, TJ Burgonio and Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau

WIP CHEER LEADER. President Arroyo could be Chirlyde Diane as well for the Filipino athletes competing in the wushu finals at the Emilio Aguinaldo College gym. The RP team wins three golds out of six events. CHINKOOK

Davao girl SEAG's 1st triple gold medalist

From page A1

With still five days of action left, the Filipinos have already surpassed their 49 gold output in the 2003 Vietnam SEA Games and are on track of meeting their target of 100 to 120 golds and their first overall championship.

As of 10:30 p.m. yesterday the Philippines also has 36 silvers and 44 bronzes, are ahead of Vietnam with a 39-33-48 tally and Thailand at 20-45-51.

The weight-strain added five golds to the medal tallies through Edward Fabayog in men's aerobics 70 kg, Irene Carreon in men's aerobics 60 kg, Vicky Ting in women's aerobics, Aida Ting in women's duo/trio and Mara May Silbert in women's aerobics 55 kg.

That output was matched by the swimmers, with Gemma Silva-Ito topping the women's 50kg category, Marlene Bulda in men's 50kg, and Cristina Villanueva for women's 14 kg.

The rowers contributed two through Benjamin Tolentino Jr. and Jose Rodriguez in the men's coxless pair and Tolentino again in the men's single sculler for La Mesa Dam.

Tri-trained Miguel Molina accomplished a golden double in swimming by tolling the men's 200m freestyle and 400m IM.

Bowlers CJ Suarez and Jhenna Talaue's matchplay created the gold in men's doubles at the expense of the Malaysians, 2704-2745, at the Pearl Bowling Center in Pandacan.

Another Suarez, Jonathan, added his way to the taekwondo gold in the flyweight division.

Late last night, the Philippine fencing team of actor Richard Gutierrez, Jeanneth Bernal, Rowena Hernandez and Wilfredo Flaviano Jr., clinched the men's epee gold at the expense of Thailand, 45-32.

Thrusting their rival Thais, Irene Candelaria, Rachelle Peralta, Jenny Ang and Arlene Hernandez topped the men's 4x400m relay.

The tale of two belonged to Eduardo "Genek" Buenaventura. A day after narrowly losing the men's 10,000m gold, Buenaventura topped the 5,000 m relay to disqualified for deliberately blocking Thai Boonchoung Sriseng as they got raced to the finish.

Sriseng than emerged champion on real footrace ran the Filipinos to the finish line but was disqualified for illegal body movements.

Humble past

With only eight golds in arbitration thus far, the Filipinos can't settle for less than the 20-plus haul 11 golds, even if they sweep the two concluding matches events on Dec. 4.

"It's not that I'm donning my humble past, but I'm not a rookie down on losing anymore," the 19-year-old Davao said in Filipino. "We live by the pact that's why we usually survive there where we were kids, but the ones who dive for the coins were the toughest."

Elsewhere, weight lifter garnered a college scholarship by Team Gilmore College, earlier topped the women's 3-more springboard synchronized and the 3-m individual events at the Rizal Memorial Center in San Pedro, Laguna.

Alex Pagulayan continued his winning ways by teaming up with Dennis Orcollo to claim the gold in 9-ball doubles. They beat the Malaysians, 11-6.

Over in Bacolod City the FIL-Ipinos kept their momentum alive with light flyweight Rowdel Peracho downing Tan Tanyaporn.

Team Philippines has now 11 boxers, including its first woman team, into the next round heading to the semifinals.

The Filipino fencers continued to another the opposition with a 15-8 thumping of Thailand's Wichai Chaiyaphan at the Philsports Basebal Stadium.

It was the third straight win for the Filipinos in baseball, which is being staged for the first time in the biennial event. They gun for win No. 4 against Cambodia.

In softball, the Philippines opened its campaign with a 9-0 thumping of arch-rival Indonesians at the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex in Pasig.

The Indons host the 3F fliz boys for the crown when this event was last celebrated in the Jakarta SEAG.

The Philippines hopes to end a 10-year gold medal drought when weightlifting competition gets going today at the Coronation Plaza Hotel in Bacolod.

Teenager Jenny Nepolmoceno will compete in the men's 69kg, Emily Bacus in the women's 48kg and Bobby Diaz in the women's 53kg as spearhead the Filipinos' campaign.

Thailand, led by 2004 Athens Olympic 77.5kg gold medalist Sirawut Thongpan, is aiming at least five of the 10 golds staked in the event.

More than action also begins today at the CSSI main office in Deary City with world champion Ronald Chan starring in the men's lightweight division (56-62kg) and Cecil Lerum in the men's flyweight (49-52kg) division.

Filipino-American players powered the Philippines to victories at the start of the beach volleyball tournament at the University of St. La Salle sands courts in Bacolod.

The women's team 5-0 Hecel Rivera and Jhaze Bocua trimmed Vietnamese Nguyen Thi Tuy and Mai Thi Hoa, 21-13, 21-13, while Chad Montano and Jayvee Sabino of RP men's team-5, subdued Malaysians Nasrudzillo Abdul Rashim and Lee Kwong Yang of Malaysia, 21-15, 14-21, 15-10.

That victories made up for the losses sustained by Sandelia Mabelle Lobrin and Gerlie Dilosina of RP-4 to defending champion Ramadhip Kuku and Jerome Santoh, 21-10, 21-14, of Thailand in the women's division.

Light schedule today

Palapalomko's Alberyl Bonjo and Darlyn Tupas of NP men's A also bowed to Indonesia 6 of Andy Permadi and Supriadi, 21-16, 21-16.

It will be a relatively light schedule today with 10 golds, including eight in swimming, up for grabs.

HUMA-(HUMAN) TRUMPETS. In triumph, Cynthia, actually, go hang jubing gun tasers at the University of San Carlos gym in Cebu City as the Filipinos train on the equal sidelines against the Philippine team.

ROOTING FOR THE HOME TEAM. Thai Rancha Khamthong wears a full regalia of the native dress during the beach volleyball contest against Team Philippines held at the University of La Salle in Bacolod City.

Palace wants to check detention of GIs in rap

By Yok Cantoria

THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT HAS requested the US Embassy for another look at the six American Marines accused of raping a Filipina woman, this time to check on their detention conditions, a Malacañang official disclosed yesterday.

"Where and how are they being held in custody? Are they behind bars? Playing golf? In confined quarters?" asked Zosimo Paredes, executive director of the Presidential Commission on the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement.

Paredes said he saw the six suspects on Nov. 30 in a conference room at the embassy which has had custody of the soldiers since the alleged rape took place at the Subic Freeport on Nov. 1.

"Normally in the military, (custody) means you are restricted to quarters. You can't leave the building without an escort," Paredes told reporters.

He said he made the "verbal request" two weeks ago to the embassy's political officer Paul O'Neil, and that he intends to bring along either Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo or Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita to see the suspects.

Paredes noted it has been two weeks since the Philippines demanded custody of the soldiers but the embassy has not yet responded. He surmised it was waiting for the results of the preliminary investigation being conducted by the Olongapo City prosecutor.

Meanwhile, the alleged rape victim's lawyer said yesterday that the counter-affidavits submitted by five of the six soldiers contained information that could pin them down.

"The FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) and Scotland Yard taught us that all we need is an admission that the alleged perpetrators and victims were together and that there was sexual contact, however rationalized, to lead to an ultimate conviction or conviction," lawyer Katrina Legarda told the Inquirer in a phone interview. With a report from Rowena Ovejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk

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First female Ombudsman faces three big test cases

From page A1

sire an approach me and lobby me, and tell me that I'm a dogmatic, then would be an exchange," Ombudsman-designate, the chief legal counsel of President Macapagal-Arroyo since 2004, said yesterday at a news conference in Malacañang.

Gutierrez, 56, begins to serve as Ombudsman today. She replaces Simeon Marcelo, who quit in September allegedly for health reasons and whose resignation took effect yesterday.

A native of Surab, Batangas, and a graduate of the Ateneo de Davao School of Law, Gutierrez busted 13 other nominees in the post, including Sandiganbayan Associate Justice Gregory Ong and Deputy Ombudsman for Luzon Victor Fernandez.

Gutierrez expressed delight at her appointment, which she said she learned about when the President congratulated her during a Cabinet meeting late yesterday morning.

She stressed that Ms Arroyo made the decision after considering her "performance and character," specifically how she performed as chief presidential legal counsel and acting justice secretary.

Challenges: 3 big cases

"I think my track record will speak for me—that I was always independent and always fair. And I will always be independent, and I will be fair in the discharge of my duties as Ombudsman," she said.

Senate President Franklin Drilon dared Gutierrez to show her mettle by acting "immediately" on pending cases.

"These [cases] for us [in a competitive, dedicated and honest public service," Drilon said of Gutierrez, who was part of his legal staff when he served as justice secretary during the Aquino administration.

"However, there are challenges ahead of her. She must be able to show that she fights against corruption without fear or favor," he said.

Drilon cited three challenges included three "big cases" involving the President, former Justice Secretary Hernando Perez, and the Commission on Elections.

He was referring to the plunder charge filed against Ms Arroyo for the alleged misuse of the PCSO and lotto fortune fund, the bribery charge filed by then Manila Rep. Mark Jimenez against Perez, and a case filed against the Comelec for the questionable P1.3 billion contract with Mega Pacific eSolutions Inc. submitted polls.

"These are three cases against which (Gutierrez's) political will to fight corruption will be tested. These are three critical cases that she will have to act on immediately ..." Drilon told reporters.

He said Gutierrez should not "sacrifice first for time."

"The people will be asserting how she will react insofar as these cases are concerned, which are now pending at the Office of the Ombudsman," he said.

Prompt action

On questions on how she intended to act on Perez's case, Gutierrez said she will find verified out whether he had pending cases or not here either.

But she promised to act promptly on all pending cases.

"Attendants of the Ombudsman is to act promptly on cases against high-ranking officials," she said, adding that this likewise applied to cases involving ordinary persons.

She also said she was not one to succumb to political pressure.

Commenting on reports on the alleged misdeeds of the President's husband in mobilize in extra cases, Gutierrez said Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo had never told her to intervene in any case.

"It will decide based on evidence presented before us, and that's it," she said.

On her being the first woman to serve as Ombudsman, Gutierrez said she was also the first woman to serve as acting justice secretary.

"I think if there was more work in the DOJ,

Asked how she intended to cope with the job that found her predecessors, Marcelo, to give it up, Gutierrez said: "I think I should maintain health by living by having enough rest, handling the work well, and praying to God for strength."

Advice

Indeed, Gutierrez said, Marcelo had given her advice on how to handle her new job.

He told her not to emulate his way of being too involved a hands-on person, such as trying to read all the papers in the file, because it would be just impossible, she said.

She also said her office was preparing to hire 400 more people to help work on the cases there.

Before she became the President's chief legal counsel, Gutierrez was active in ending justice secretary from November 2003 to January 2005, and again from December 2003 to August 2004.

As the Department of Justice, she served as undersecretary, legislative chief state counsel, deputy state counsel, and legal staff.

She also chaired the President's Committee on Decongestion and the Special Committee for the Protection of Children.

Welcome development

Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio said in a phone interview that Gutierrez had enough experience in law and in government affairs to efficiently run the office.

He also said Office of the Ombudsman personnel would gladly work with her.

Former Manila City Prosecutor Jose Flaminiano, a nominee for the post President Joseph Estrada's team handling his plunder and perjury cases before the Sandiganbayan Special Division, said he expected Gutierrez "to apply the law and the rules" in the cases handled under her in the discharge of her constitutional duties."

Flaminiano urged everyone to give Gutierrez a chance to prove her worth.

Former Rep. Joel Villanueva said Gutierrez should not hesitate to go after influential members of the government, but she end up as a "dysfunction" of the administration.

"He give Ms Gutierrez the benefit of the doubt. But to get any absolute support, she should show independence and transparency. She should go after the big fish, like Big Mike's interests," Villanueva said, adding.

He also's other reforms in the Ombudsman's office as good legacy, she should show that she is only after the truth and accountability, and not to please Ms Arroyo."

Former Majority Leader Prospero Nograles said Gutierrez is a "good choice" to replace Marcelo.

"She has an impressive record. She has proven her competence and achievements. She has always her loyalty to the President, her dedication and passion for her work," Nograles said.

Last ceremony

On Tuesday, Marcelo led his last flag-raising ceremony at the Office of the Ombudsman in Quezon City, where employees, some of whom were weeping, to support his moment.

Evelyn Ballesteros, spokesperson of the Office of the Ombudsman, said Marcelo made an example of the right work ethic, which many had tried to emulate.

Ballesteros said Marcelo would be missed.

Even his opponents had nothing but praise for Marcelo.

Former Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, who is an Estrada's man, described Marcelo as a good guy who became dissenter of the dockyard right he had to endure working for "the government of the day."

Enrile also said Marcelo's "one control" was his family.

"One cannot serve the government and remain healthy," Enrile said, adding that Marcelo resigned because he was aware of consequences. MNB reports from Jeffrei E. Flores and Philip C. Tubeo

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BusinessWorld

INQUIRER

In Divisoria, Manila, "the 168," was created just for tiangge operators.

It cop customers from Metro Philippines shopping mall operator estimated that the 168 has become so big that its retail sales alone could be worth at least P2 billion a year or equivalent to the turnover of a mid-size shopping mall.

"But that is just the retail side. 168's wholesale business is apparently bigger," the mall executive said.

Claudio said the Philippine Retailers Association (PRA) recently asked the government against the proliferation of tiangge-building similar to the 168 such as the Hong Kong Star/Mass on Roxas Boulevard in Manila.

"Consumer confidence is very low right now. Filipinos are holding back on their purchases until the economy is straightened out," Claudio said. "If prices are saving whatever they have because of the high cost of oil and limited income opportunities."

Buying basics only

Businessman Raul T. Concepcion said: "Consumer spending has gone down because there is no purchasing power. Everybody is just buying the basics."

With the usual spending spree during Christmas expected to be muted this year, Claudio said most retailers had not stocked up on their inventory in preparing for the holiday season.

In fact, we expect sales for Christmas season to be flat. However, we're expecting sales to go down from 12 percent to 20 percent because people are holding back or downscaling," Claudio said.

Other than car is a car-based industry, they'd go to a fast food joint. Rather than buy new shoes, they'd probably buy new socks," he said.

Unfair competition

What has made the plight of retailers worse, Claudio said, was the unfair competition posed by flea markets where most of the goods sold were believed to be smuggled.

Lito Mendiola, an executive of SM Department Store, said it was "undeniable" that flea markets had started to eat into the market of legitimate retailers in shopping malls.

"Shopping malls still have the edge in terms of quality and consistency of products and services," Mendiola said.

Fashionable

But flea markets have become a big go-down to retail operators because

shopping in these market-style stores have become fashionable among Manila's elite, according to Concepcion.

"Now can a legitimate business, subject to the minimum wage, pays income tax, pays custom duties, and follows government regulations on consumer rights and product standards compete with a tiangge operator who is probably getting his cases goods?" Concepcion said.

If ever, the government collects only P200 a day in taxes on flea markets, according to Claudio.

Traders from China

Claudio said pushing for more government regulation on flea markets did not necessarily mean that the retail industry was going after Filipino micro entrepreneurs. The target, he said, should be foreign traders who flout the country's laws.

Claudio said the biggest flea markets were being run by traders from China. A few came from South Korea and Taiwan.

Although the country opened the retail sector to foreigners eight years ago, retail operations worth P200,000 and below are still limited to Filipinos.

"The Chinese traders have gone around this provision by marrying Filipinas," Claudio said.

Bishop's 'delicadeza' questioned

From page A1

P1 million from the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office. It was purportedly intended for Bradley "Pondo ng Pinoy" project.

Theology of crumbs

Reading might have defeated the wisdom of his pet project, Pondo ng Pinoy, by accepting Ms Arroyo's donation, unit of the two sources said.

Based on the "theology of the crumbs," the project prefers to accept 25 centavos from each adult for the faithful. For together, all donations form a fund that helps the poorest of the poor start a livelihood in the Archdiocese of Manila.

Organizers discourage big and one-time donations. What's more important is to change the Catholic attitude toward the poor by making people think of the needs through every mission saved for them daily, according to Bradley when he launched the project.

In the case of Ms Arroyo's generous donation, one of the priests said he also unwittingly got not crumbs but "the whole bakery".

The source said the President failed to personally hand it over to Bradley as the prelate left the Sarmiento de San Antonio Church in Antipolo after he delivered the opening remarks.

Ms Arroyo instead gave the check to Fr. Anton Pascual, executive director of the Pondo ng Pinoy Community Foundation. Both sources said Pascual later forwarded the donation to the program and told Bradley that it was from the President.

Pondo now worth P51M

Pascual yesterday told the Inquirer that Pondo ng Pinoy was now worth P51 million. It was up by P1 million based on the announcement organizers made during the project's first anniversary on June 11.

One of the priests questioned the timing and impropriety of the donation. It coincided with the CBCP's plenary through its July 10 pastoral statement, was seen to have helped save Ms Arroyo amid mounting calls for her resignation.

Clean hands

"Donations, to be refined, should come from clean hands and should be for a good purpose," the priest told the Inquirer. "We have done our efforts together, a donation is not morally acceptable."

At that time, the President was bent too bring out to Catholic bishops who remained divided over how to best resolve questions about the legitimacy of her administration.

Thirteen days after making the donation, Ms Arroyo paid an unannounced visit to Archbishop Angel Lagdameo at the CBCP office in Intramuros.

Aside from his election as the new president of the country's 119 Catholic bishops, the Jaro prelate met with Ms Arroyo for nearly an hour. CBCP emplacement later told the Inquirer that they saw a teary-eyed Ms Arroyo emerging from the closed-door meeting.

Dinner in Malacañang

Shortly before the bishops gathered for their annual plenary assembly on July 18, the bishops learned that four of their own had been invited to dinner in Malacañang.

Among those who were invited were Archbishop Oscar Cruz, then apostolic nuncio to the Philippines; Archbishop Antonio Franco, the new nuncio; Archbishop Fernando Capalla, and Jaro Archbishop Angel Lagdameo.

Lagdameo, who was elected CBCP president during the bishops' plenary assembly, was the only one who attended the dinner.

Cruz, Franco and Capalla were not able to attend the dinner because they were already in Rome for the consistory of cardinals.

Lagdameo

No illegal dismissal - ABS-CBN

By Lala B. Salaverria

MAKATI CITY: ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. has denied the claims of its former employees before the National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC) that they were illegally dismissed and thus should be reinstated.

The broadcasting network said the employees were compensated when their services in the solicitor company.

"ABS-CBN categorically states that its former employees and employees who filed cases against the network have accepted an early retirement package and received the separation benefits for their years of service. ABS-CBN's decisions were all executed in accordance with the law," the network said in a statement.

The latest to file complaints against ABS-CBN before the NLRC were former ANC Radyo Patrol reporters Willie Delgado, Jr. and Jess Benitez-Cruz and former ABS-CBN TV news editor Joey Falcon. Their complaints were filed last week.

The three complainants said ABS-CBN should reinstate them and pay them back wages and benefits. Named respondents were ABS-CBN chief executive officer Eugenio Lopez, Jr., president Luis Alejandro and vice president for Manila Radio Clarence Peter Olivarez.

The two reporters and desk editor were among the 350 employees whose services the company terminated beginning August this year. The terminated employees included veteran anchors and reporters.

The TV network also said the cases filed by former reporters Melo Acuña and Lionel Castro and news department administrator Bella Cruz were "totally different cases."

According to ABS-CBN, its decision to let go of some of its employees was carefully studied.

"ABS-CBN would like to reiterate that it will be very open in entering cash and asset position, each and every individual who would be affected by the special separation program to ensure fairness and honesty with the network's decision," it said.

PHILIPPINE DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION

NOTICE TO DEPOSITORS OF THE CLOSED RURAL BANK OF SAN NICOLAS (BATANGAS), INC.

1. Pursuant to Monetary Board Resolution No. 1163 dated November 10, 2005 ordering the closure of the Rural Bank of San Nicolas (Batangas), Inc. (RBSNBI), the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation (PDIC) will start its operations for the servicing of claims for insured deposits in the closed RBSNBI on Friday, November 18, 2005.

2. Depositors are requested to proceed directly to the following payoff sites where they can file their claims with the PDIC representatives during office hours (9:00 AM to 5:00 PM), from Monday to Friday.

BSFI Office/Branch	Payoff Site/ Address	Duration of Active Operations
San Nicolas (Head Office)	San Nicolas, Batangas	November 18, 2005 to December 16, 2005
Balayan Branch	Balayan, Batangas	November 18, 2005 to December 16, 2005
Lobo's Branch	Lobo's, Batangas	November 18, 2005 to December 16, 2005
San Pascual Branch	San Pascual, Batangas	November 18, 2005 to December 16, 2005
Bolbok Branch	Bolbok, Batangas	November 18, 2005 to December 16, 2005
Rosario Branch	Rosario, Batangas	November 18, 2005 to December 2, 2005

After the payoff date, all depositors can file their claims personally at the PDIC Claims Counter, 8th Floor, SSS Bldg., Ayala Avenue corner V.A. Rufino St., Makati City, from Monday to Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. or by mail to:

The Manager
Claims Processing Department
Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation
PDIC Makati Action Center
PO. Makati City

3. Depositors are advised to present the following requirements to the PDIC representatives when filing their claims:
   a. Original evidence of deposit such as Savings Passbook, Certificate of Time Deposit or Bank Statement including Unused Checks.
   b. Two (2) valid identification cards/documents (IDs) with depositor's signature.

   Other documents may be required by the PDIC representatives in the course of their processing of claims filed.

4. Pursuant to the provision of R.A. 3591, as amended by R.A. 9302, the last day for filing of claims for insured deposits in the closed Rural Bank of San Nicolas (Batangas), Inc. is on **November 16, 2006**, after the expiration of one (1) year from the date PDIC as receiver shall no longer accept any claim for insured deposits, terminated with the said closed bank.

PHILIPPINE DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION

PDI – Mon., 11:29 P, Dec. 1, 2005

The WORLD

Editor Lorenzo B. Queen

Vatican formally bans ordination of gays

VATICAN CITY—THE VATICAN ON TUESDAY published an instruction approved by Pope Benedict XVI banning bishops across the world from ordaining homosexuals into the priesthood.

The edict has already sparked a row within the Roman Catholic Church and has been widely condemned by gay and civil rights groups when leaked extracts were published by newspapers last month.

The prohibition applies to seminarians involved in homosexual practices as well as those displaying "deep-seated homosexual tendencies" or those who support "gay culture." The Church "while professedly respecting the persons in question, cannot admit to the seminary or to holy orders those who practice homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support the so-called 'gay culture,'"

"One must in no way overlook the negative consequences that can derive from the ordination of persons with deep-seated homosexual tendencies," the 25-paragraph instruction says.

The Instruction follows a series of sex scandals within the Catholic Church in the United States, Latin America and Europe, and behind Vatican efforts to tackle priestly pedophilia.

However, the edict approved by the 78-year-old pope leaves the door to the priesthood ajar for men whose homosexuality was only "the expression of a transitory problem...for example that of adolescence not yet superseded," it said even undergoing such a passing phase of homosexuality must show their tendencies had been "clearly overcome at least three years before ordination to the diaconate." A seminarist becomes a deacon up to two years before full ordination.

The document does not say how a candidate would be able to prove that his "transitory problem" had been overcome, or by what means it would be independently determined.

The Vatican began sounding teams in September to inspect more than 300 seminaries in the United States with a mandate to look for "evidence of homosexuality." The idea was first mooted after the late Pope John Paul II summoned US bishops to the Vatican in 2002 to discuss a spate of sex scandals across the United States, mainly involving pedophile priests—but that in turn led to allegations that the Vatican was overlooking homosexuality with pedophilia.

The US bishops' conference had then publicly conceded there was a "homosexual atmosphere" in many seminaries.

The leak last month of the document published on Tuesday provoked outrage among many Catholic groups in Europe and the United States.

One dissident Catholic newsletter, Adista, described the move as "ethical cleansing." The Vatican unsurprisingly has no official estimate of the number of homosexual men in the ranks of the priesthood. AFP

Bush set to unveil Iraq victory strategy

DENVER—US PRESIDENT GEORGE W. Bush was to unveil a "strategy for victory in Iraq" on Wednesday, hoping to convince a skeptical US public two and a half years after the war began that he has a plan to end it.

BUSH

He was to unveil the blueprint at the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, as a time when his poll numbers have sunk to their lowest ever and more and more Americans want him to chart a course for a quick US withdrawal.

White House spokesperson Scott McClellan said Sunday that the speech, the first in a series of appeals for support ahead of Iraq's Dec. 15 elections, would center on efforts to train Iraqi security forces to replace US soldiers.

McClellan said that the Pentagon hoped to have enough well-trained Iraqi troops to shoulder the US presence in the war-torn country in 2006...raising the possibility of troop reductions ahead of the November 2006 US elections, over which the increasingly unpopular war looms large.

Bush, who has rejected any timetable for a withdrawal, said Sunday, "The people don't want me making decisions based upon politics; they want me to make decisions based upon the recommendations from our generals on the ground." "We've heard some people say pull them out right now. That's a huge mistake. It'd be a terrible mistake. It sends a bad message to our troops, and it sends a bad message to our enemy, sends certain a bad message to the Iraqis," he said.

In the campaign speech, "The president will argue against setting arbitrary timetables or a precipitous withdrawal," McClellan told reporters traveling with the president to El Paso and Denver, Colorado.

"In 2006, I think, you know, the expectation is that conditions will be changing on the ground. We've been making real progress with the training of Iraqi security forces and conditions that will permit us to be able to reduce our presence," said the spokesperson. AFP

Creativity linked to sexual success

LONDON—PABLO PICASSO, LORD BYRON AND DylanThomas had more in common than simple creativity. They also had active sex lives, which researchers said on Wednesday was no coincidence.

Psychologists at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne and the Open University in Britain found that professional artists and poets have about twice as many partners as other people.

"Both creativity and sex are like a form of magic."

But Dr Daniel Nettle, a psychologist at Newcastle University's School of Biology, said it is a double-edge sword.

"Poets and artists have more sexual partners but they also have high rates of depression," he told Reuters.

Nettle and his colleague Helen Clegg questioned 625 British men and women, including professional artists, poets and schizophrenic patients, about their creative activity, sexual encounters and mental health characteristics.

Although creative people have long been associated with artists' sex lives, the researchers believe their study is the first to back it up with research.

They found that professional artists and poets had between 4 and 10 sexual partners, while less creative people had an average of three.

"We found it in both the men and women which was quite a surprise to us," said Nettle, who reported the finding in the journal "The Proceedings of the Royal Society (B)."

The study also showed that the average number of sexual partners increased as creative output went up. What the artists produce drops somewhat, which seems to enhance their sexual allure. Reuters

Canada sets Jan. 23 elections

OTTAWA—CANADIANS WILL HEAD TO THE polls on Jan. 23 after the longest election campaign in decades, Prime Minister Paul Martin announced Tuesday, after his scandal-tainted minority government was ousted in a no-confidence vote.

Martin spoke after asking Canada's de facto head of state, Governor General Michaelle Jean, to dissolve Parliament and kick off a 36-day election campaign that is likely to be the most riveting in Canadian history and the first over the Christmas holiday in decades.

"I'm going in very much campaign on our record and where we want to take the country," Martin said.

His Liberal Party lost a minority vote by 171 votes to 133 last Monday in the House of Commons amid acrimonious exchanges over corruption allegations.

But Martin's party maintains a slight lead over the opposition Conservatives in public opinion polls and many including two prominent conservative leaders, former prime minister Joe Clark and Alberta Premier Ralph Klein, predicted another minority Liberal government.

"A vote for a Liberal government is a vote to protect a strong economy. With the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years. It's a vote to maintain the best of fiscal performance ever seen in the history of this country," Martin said.

Under a Liberal government, "Canada has gone from paupers to power house. Deficits are history. We've had eight surpluses in a row now... (and) said: down more than 60 billion (Canadian) dollars in debt," he said.

An Environics financial poll for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation gave the Liberals 35 percent support, the Conservatives 26 percent, New Democratic Party (NDP) 17 percent and the separatist Bloc Quebecois, which runs candidates only in the French-speaking province of Quebec, 12 percent, or 50 percent in Quebec.

A Strategic Counsel poll for the Globe and Mail newspaper pegged the Liberals at 36 percent, Conservatives at 28 percent, the NDP at 17 percent and the Bloc Quebecois at 14 percent.

One pollster told broadcaster CTV the results were "more and perverse" because Canadian attitudes had not changed much since Martin was first elected prime minister 17 months ago.

Many now predict that Martin and his main rival, Conservative leader Stephen Harper, will be fighting for their political survival, each losing possible expulsion if their respective parties fail to make gains in the election.

The Liberals lost a majority government in the last election because of outrage over a budding scandal and infighting between Martin supporters and former prime minister Jean Chrétien loyalists.

Harper said the Liberals "have been preoccupied with damage control, lurching from one scandal to another, recklessly promising to spend money desperately trying to avoid the people's verdict. But no longer." "We need to change government to replace the old cozy politics with sweeping new reforms. We need to change to replace the culture of entitlement with a commitment to accountability and we need a change to replace benefits for a four-with government for everyone," he said. AFP

A VIDEO grab taken Nov. 29 from Qatari news channel Al-Jazeera television shows one of the four foreigners taken hostage in Iraq. AP

4 foreign workers abducted in Iraq

BAGHDAD—FOUR WESTERN HOSTAGES branded as spies were shown in a video aired on Sunday as a spate of abductions took Iraq back to the dire security conditions from which [illegible] faced from kidnappers last year.

The four aid workers—two Canadians, a Briton and an American—were shown in the eight-minute broadcast by Al-Jazeera television three days after they were snatched in west Baghdad.

The grainy video from a previously unknown group calling itself the "Swords of Truth" showed four men sitting with their legs tucked under them on the ground. It appeared to carry Sunday's date stamp and had crossed swords on the top right-hand corner.

The organization accused the men of being "spies working for the occupying forces" under the guise of working for a Christian group. Al-Jazeera did not say if the tape included a threat against the men's lives. The four work for Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), one of the few remaining aid groups operating in Iraq.

The video showed the passports of 74-year-old Briton Norman Kember, a retired professor and lifelong peace activist who has been identified by the British Foreign Office.

CPT identified the other three hostages as American Tom Fox, 54, a father of two from Clearbrook, Virginia; James Loney, 41, a community worker from Toronto; and Harmeet Singh Sooden, 32, a Canadian electrical engineer and squash coach.

"We pray that those who hold them will be merciful and that they will be released soon," CPT said in a statement.

"We are angry because what has happened is our testimony to the result of the actions of the US and UK governments due to the illegal attack on Iraq and the continuing occupation and oppression of its people," it said.

The tape of the hostages emerged on the same day another group issued video showing it was holding a German archaeologist and her driver hostage. They disappeared in Baghdad on Friday. Reuters

WORLDBRIEFS

Indonesia bird flu death

JAKARTA—A 21-year-old Indonesian woman who died has tested positive for bird flu, a senior researcher at the health ministry said on Wednesday. Tjiptang Mamahit said the woman had been treated at the Sulianto Saroso hospital, Jakarta's hospital for treating bird flu outbreaks. She died on Tuesday. "We have conducted the test and the results show positive," Mamahit told Reuters, adding that results testing for the presence of the H5N1 virus have to be confirmed by laboratory in Hong Kong affiliated with the World Health Organization. Wien Pitta, a spokesperson for the hospital, said the woman had been in contact with dead chickens before being admitted to the hospital on Nov. 24. "Whatever admitted to the condition was already bad," he told Reuters. Indonesia has had seven deaths from bird flu confirmed by the Hong Kong laboratory. Another five people have been confirmed to have contracted the virus but have survived. Reuters

Peres to quit Labour Party

JERUSALEM—Shimon Peres, outgoing Israeli president, will announce on Wednesday he is quitting the Labour Party and supporting Ariel Sharon, Israel's Maariv newspaper said on Wednesday. Sharon, prime minister's new party, Channel 10 TV said. Channel 10 said Peres, attending an Israeli-Palestinian peace event in Barcelona, consulted his decision in one of the reporters accompanying him on the visit. Peres was not immediate confirmation by Peres' advisers, who said earlier on Tuesday he may leave Labour and could announce his decision on his return to Israel on Wednesday. Channel 10 correspondent Eitan Yudin, reporting from Barcelona, said Peres had decided to quit Labour, which ousted him as leader in office 9 months, and "embark on a new political path." Reuters

France antiterror law

PARIS—France's lower house of parliament on Tuesday adopted a new antiterrorism bill drawn up following the London transport bombings, that would allow greatly increased state surveillance of public places. Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy told parliament the new law would "equip France with a more effective arsenal to prevent terrorist acts" and would give "the law enforcement authorities greater means to avoid a catastrophe." The bill, which the government hopes will become law before the end of the year, is set to be put before the Senate in mid-December. It was supported by the 363 members of the ruling center-right UMP, and by only the 6 MP within the 21 deputies from the Communist and Green parties voted against, and the main opposition Socialists abstained. AFP

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OPINION

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Throwing money

EDITORIAL

OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS HAVE BEEN repeatedly hailed as modern-day heroes for helping save the economy from collapse. And no one is about to begrudge them that accolade. This year in particular, as political turbulence threatened to sink the economy, a 28-percent increase in their dollar remittances during the first three quarters kept the peso from collapse and more recently even allowed it to recover so that this week its value touched a seven-month high.

But thousands of OFWs need help themselves. A "global situationer" for the year 2004, prepared by the Department of Foreign Affairs, counted a total of 4,775 Filipinos being held in foreign prisons, almost a quarter of them women. Cimarron Sur Rep. Rolando Andaya, chair of the House committee on appropriations, observed after reading the report that "in every continental except Antarctica, in every climatic zone, you can find a Filipino behind bars."

Those being held in foreign prisons were not the only ones who faced serious problems. The report said that in the same year, 3,883 OFWs sought help from Philippine embassies. And a total of 12,613 were repatriated with the help of the government.

Andaya said every Filipino overseas who runs into trouble should be helped. He has proposed that the P4B he allowed to remain up to 50 percent of its collections from consular services to fund the extension of legal and other forms of assistance to Filipinos who get into trouble abroad. He also said that P250 million from the the DFA's P5.3 billion budget for 2006 will be allocated in a "building fund" that will be used to upgrade our Philippine consular offices.

Although the money isn't his, it still is good to hear Andaya trying to put money where his mouth is for this particular purpose. But we wonder if throwing money at the problem is going to solve it. The militant labor group Migrante, for instance, has pointed out that there's a law mandating the allocation of P100 million yearly in a legal assistance fund for OFWs. Now Migrante is asking where all that money went.

If indeed Andaya believes that the big number of Filipinos being held in foreign prisons is a "matter of concern," why is he giving top priority to improving the look of our consular offices abroad? Having well-appointed consulates and embassies will, without doubt, boost the morale of Filipinos abroad and make them proud. But will that keep the constantly harbored among them out of trouble and those who have been falsely accused of crimes by their employers out of jail?

Before Andaya starts throwing away money that isn't his, perhaps he should reflect some more on the findings contained in that DFA situationer. For example, he himself pointed out that the most often cited causes for the jailing of Filipinos are work-related and immigration-concerns. The first could mean anything, including poor working conditions, unlawful employer-employee relationships, etc. The second probably involves illegal entry or improper documentation. Both can be readily addressed right here, through a more thorough scrutiny of employment contracts, a more rigid screening of job applicants and a more serious campaign to inform Filipinos about the perils of illegal migration.

A deeper study is also needed to find out why more Filipinos encounter more problems in certain places. For instance, the DFA situationer shows that 2,722 Filipinos sought help from the Philippine Embassy in Kuwait. That number represents 40 percent of the 5,503 cases of "OFWs in distress" worldwide, which is way out of proportion to the number of Filipinos working in that small patch of the Middle East. Are Filipinos perhaps finding it more difficult to adjust to Kuwaiti culture than anywhere else in the world? Or is there an attitude problem on the part of the Kuwaitis? Either way, this disturbing figure suggests a need for a serious review of Philippine labor export policy in relation to certain countries.

All these will, of course, require the expenditure of some money but not in the amounts that Andaya has been talking about. And they will go much farther to protecting the welfare of our OFWs than anything he has proposed. To think that Andaya wants to be the budget secretary.

Tambourine brigade

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

STIR LAUGHING, CHIMES AND CHRISTMAS trees are now looming on all our eyes. They bring on the "unobtrusive brigade": economy kids who hang fluorescent bottle caps, netted to resist, to accompany off-key carols as they dodge a few pesos.

Philippine style, "native construction" should be in school. But poverty leaves 32 out of every 100 to drop out before reaching Grade 6. And they know this season more than ever.

"Christmas is the only time I know of when men and women work, by one reckoning, to open their eyes to hearts freely," Charles Dickens wrote in 1843. But these chronically lean, gray youngsters can barely read. Thus, few more of dickens' tales of Christmastide past, present and yet to come.

Like the bi-engineered lovings of "I Christian Cord," we front are the deprived "less in another race of creatures, bound on other journeys, but fellow passengers to the grave." Then we regard.

Poverty is an widespread in our countries that we take deprivation for granted. Lazarus at our gates blends almost into the woodwork. And the unbearable lightness of the "useless," dwells in. There aren't what makes for a humane society.

To help strip these blinders, note the "Philippines Human Development Report 2005," developed the global results published by the United Nations Development Programme. There, human desire falls among the region's fifth or human development indicators. Improving knowledge and education ranked still lower.

Are many of them Dalits, shorter and measurably slower than their Malaysian, Korean or Singaporean counterparts? Why?

Here, 22 percent of people are underweight. It is 7 percent in Malaysia. Four nutrition years about 1 half (47 percent) of kids in Negros Occidental and Northern Samar (46 percent), national surveys show. They're described by former bellwethers Beijing, Brazil or Hong Kong.

"The key to their success?" Foreign Secretary Blase reminds. "You'll see success." Sure. But does life here worldwide have to be shorter than in other lands?

Life expectancy for Filipinos is now 70.2 years. But Singaporeans at 78 and Japanese at 81 years show what is possible. "That a man's years should exceed his grasp," Dr. what's a heaven for?" Robert Browning asked.

"Theatrical disparities continue to be large," the Philippine 2005 notes. Cuba, Portugal, Guatemala, Costa Rica or La Union are where life expectancy at 70 years plus. That's almost two decades longer than the life expectancy in Iraq, Timor Leste or Lanao del Sur. Cambers in Iraq, Angola, Sudan, Western Sahara and Eastern Timor are in the 66-year bracket.

Life expectancy in all provinces rose, with one early exception, Maguindanao, the PHDR notes: it dropped to 52 years from 53.3 in 1990.

Camarines Sur, Sierra Bulja and Davao are for example four in spreading life spans. Davao chronicle posted the furthest increase: 1.7 years. Lapu, Iloilo's Cotabato, Bukidnon and Cotabato followed, ranking second-and-fifth 1.4 to 1.6 years.

Antique just sakit into the "Bottom Ten." Aside from the five Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, provinces with disorders include Ifugao, Aurora, among others.

Lack of safe water is one cause for this gap. In Maidanao, 66 percent of the people use open, easily contaminated wells. In contrast, 86 percent of Metropolitan have reliable water sources. Quality of modern facilities also vary widely.

"Differences in drinking, houses or nurses are galling enough," the late Dadanod Simeon Ocampo, Philippine Human Development Network and prominent grows out an obscenity. They give treatment of the poor a raw and dangerous edge. We will wage the wheelchair if we are

Christmas story

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

IT'S DEC. 1, AND FOR MOST OF US FILIPINOS, that still fairly marks the longest Christmas for the longest number of the neighborhood. Even if the lines it started were endless, they have been playing Christmas songs for some weeks now. It's the time of year when department store divas, people streamers a little more inconsiderate, shoppers about the perils of the season to the point of the soul. Which is as it should be. But I never know that the one need accurately predicates the other. The more I think about it, the more I realize that the Christmas story holds a special significance at this time. Not that we do not do the things that are Caesar's and the things that are God's.

How does that story go?

A poor couple—a carpenter, who can barely make both ends meet, and his wife, who has been an object of gossip for getting pregnant. In their hometown—an ancient, computer village from the cold wintry night. They knock on the doors of inns, of taverns, of the houses of relatives and friends, only to be turned away time and time and. As the end of their rope, they finally find a manger, a sickening place for the animals, and there, amid the filthy surroundings and hot breaths, they give birth to the Savior of mankind. Heavenly choirs sing the bright and cheerful message—not to the rich and powerful. Christmas news in our homeland, the woman goes back.

Three nights or nights but have been a fierce fight and angelic voices, that accompanied the birth of the Savior was exposed to enact the event. Rumor has it there were visitors some days later. There were not solitary visitors, there were kings. They came from the East, following a bright star that guided them all the way to the manger. The visitors of the kings had been forewarned to them, and they had come bringing gifts fit for one: gold, frankincense and myrrh. Maybe the bright star was their faith because, for some reason, it never occurred to them that, one day, they might have got to see the wrong address—say, the palace lying to the east, wrapped in rags, might not be the promised messiah; and, three, their precious gifts might end up in the pawnshop or the hands of thieves.

But that is why they are called the magi, the Wise Men, the people who had the eyes to see through illusion and reality.

What special meaning does that story have for today?

Well, if you think of work as serving you first, in the bible way, then you can always overcome the blandish, or boredom, or brute. But you can always draw a parallel between the way Mary and Joseph never seized away for the sinners of inns and houses, who thought the prospect of a baby was a bad omen, and the way the crush was scorned by Congress, which thought the prospect of economic revolutions seeing the light of day in the provinces was a bad omen. Indeed, you can go on to draw a parallel between Mary and Joseph being denied refuge and God not being granted a child sovereignty prevented from birthing the truth in the country. Or between the magi who were the exalted feature of a known thief and a black, proud named Sofia Gatot being welcomed with open arms by the beleaguered and persecuted Muslims to formally his status while the whole world looked on.

The Wise Men, well, there are many of them in this country people who have always had the eyes to see through illusion and reality, people who were never deluded by the shouting and the dancing and the dazzling frenzy of fist. Most of them are not kings, they are plain folk, guided only by the thunderstorm star of decency and common sense, who never have to look for one minute that, one to know the star direction is in the wrong address, true, the small person in the wrong address is everything but this country's social; and there, their precious gifts are destined to end up in the hands of thieves.

Since July, we have also had the addition of people who have at least four desk definitions, if not more under-one. I don't know what we may have got from "voting," maybe "no," but I'm sure a another story. There are people who have rediscovered the truth, though what star guided them to have therefore only they can say.

And finally, and, I've always thought that the Christmas story is a necessary lens in order to see more power. The Greek and Roman mythologies also told of divinities intervening themselves—quite apart from impregnating women in the case of the more concupiscent ones—in the affairs of men himself—but ironically in the form of mortals with unusual strength and beauty. Jesus Christ, king of kings, wasn't born a king. He was born not to the rich of his street children you might see in the red light district. He was born not to the powerful of his time, the Israelites of the lowly.

Bring God, or else fear of God, he would have chosen to be born a rock star and govern the gift in the form of a king. Or many a single century, in the time and place that he did, he chose to be born then way, and to die a most horrible death—I hear the Elliott shrinking in the Commentator corner of Tomas Clavio. Super-Jesus? Why should he? What does that say about the feeling-not to be humbling, and real and down in simplicity? Does the verse free words, we are going to see the people who were the victims of plebeian power fall to their knees once again and prove the coming of the Lord.

Question is, what kind?

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On being focused

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

ON THE PAST FEW DAYS, MR. FILIPINO® HAVE been most part-time journalist searching out unsung selfless troopers with the best of Southeast Asia, and thinking how much better we would do if we, as our youths officials were more focused and committed, instead of bickering over turf, funding, patronage, etc. Let's hope he can put all these problems aside and make newcomers or moving our country forward in the arena of sports and other endeavors.

* * *

Our national hero Dr. Jose Rizal, called the Filipino watch the hope of the motherland. We've seen this evident in sports those last few days.

Ms. Rizal, in the field of classical music, we saw 15-year-old Filipino violin prodigy Ms. Sebastian Gardner perform with the third-ranked Orchestra of the Deutsche Oper Berlin in the Philharmonie Cuvee Saloon. Chloe is in Manila for a Christmas break from her academic and violin studies in Germany. It was a beautiful interaction between the young violinist and conductor among China's earliest parents) and the young violinist, as they have through Felix Mendelssohn's "Concerto for Violin in Orchestra." Chloe is also set to perform with Manila's the 75th birthday of them. Almost a violin prodigy in his time, and the audience was simply amazed that he could still find his notes with his violin. Chloe is also set to perform with Manila's people, especially in mes Paganini studies, among the best concerto he obliged. One can just imagine how Chloe, any another 15 or 16 years of living a life of love, pain, joy, sorrow—all those emotions she deciphers on violin strings.

* * *

Last week, I followed assiduously the explosion of national presentations all over Manila in a vast array of their platforms and positions of influence. Some of the "intellectual" content I caught the "busy traffic" in De La Salle University's Parisian Archangels that, featuring the only means of pedestrian crossing in the area, is a child prodigy in her time, and Carmina Reglia, Amelia Carreiro and Bonnie Arnaiz, wife of former US Ambassador to Manila Michael Armacost. These ladies were once feted in Manila by then Ambassador Isabel Hilton for an Independence Day celebration. They came to enjoy playing together in the nuevo classico music scene in Manila. This Japanese international "Rizal Festival" of religious music at the San Agustin Church in downtown, featuring Spanish organist Jose Luis Echeverria Para, who drove the late Imee Marcos crazy with his 500-plus old pipe organ and the Children's Choir from Mandaluyong. Or clida to Fr Pedro Galbiati, DSS, the director of San Agustin Museum.

And they drove over the wonderful choir of German magni in celebration of the 35th anniversary of German-Philippine friendship. The choir featured traditional German costumes and dances, as well as their music of a wide variety of styles, from the premiere in Koeln. There was a part where some youths performed on different percussion instruments. It was so well-coordinated it made me think of a symphony orchestra. Unfortunately for the German choir, it was always in overpowered.

* * *

Kudos all these cultural events saw the halls only about two-thirds full at best. I thought, perhaps, there could be some coordination whereby a national agency could arrange with the business community for vouchers from various public schools to attend these events. The business community could provide buses and contact to schools for the vouchers.

As it stands in China, perform. I couldn't help thinking: If only his former classmates at the Philippine Science High School could see him, what an inspiration he would be to archery discipline and focus—virtues we seem too strong people to imbibe. (We also compared in such exercises in Germany.)

* * *

Last week, I also managed to squeeze in a half-day activity on "Exploring New Business & Trade Opportunities in Vietnam," hosted by the Vietnamese Embassy and co-organized by the Center for Global Best Practices, in cooperation with the Philippine Chamber of Commerce & Industry (PCCI). The lead speakers were my good friend Bay Vietnamese Ambassador to the Philippines, Dr. Nguyen Vu Tung, former managing partner of Arthur Andersen Vietnam and former VP-business development manager for investment and in "Doing Business in Vietnam" by the vice president and executive director of the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI), drawn on the many similarities between RP and Vietnam, our 14th largest trading partner. I have been to Vietnam on several occasions in the past and the color of our land area and population. Vietnam's population is 85 percent rural and 15 percent urban; 20 percent is below 20 years of age and 15 percent is above 60 years old. Its 43 million labor force can offer our work force very stiff competition, especially since they have a more competitive spirit. Movies remind that the young Vietnamese are very much into the Internet and that information technology is the first priority all over the country. Tourism has also become such an important industry, drawing over three million tourists a year, compared to ten just over two million.

* * *

Afterwards, Sen. Richard Gordon was asked to address the assembled impromptu. He recalled how Americans and the Vietnamese were when RP was chairing a new course for Subic in the post-US scenario. Someone then asked why the Vietnamese, not the Filipinos, are now involved in the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) the "alternative procurement law" in China. Gordon said they have become very inward-focused and committed after their long struggle for freedom and independence. Their former foe has thankfully left to focus on their economic development.

The missing face of AIDS

TODAY IS WORLD AIDS AWARENESS DAY.

Somewhere in today's freedom, five or more youths will be infected by the virus—the only child-driven affected by HIV-AIDS. "Silenced by" twenty three children born parents (perinatal living with HIV-AIDS) PLH) or are themselves infected.

By the way, you don't say PWA (persons with AIDS) anymore. You say PLH. So much for being politically correct.

Children, statistics says, are the missing face of AIDS awareness in the Philippines. Statistics only tells us Filipino children affected by HIV, or cases, not to me, but about how the children's situation. Their parents' hesitancy to be forthright about the disease to one of the reasons their children are not getting the attention they need.

After reading the results of the study I wanted to meet and interview a family affected by HIV-AIDS. And I wanted that there was a great deal of hesitancy on the part of the families. In fact, out of 10 "identified" children, only 50 were allowed by their parents to participate in the study.

Some stories in the study gave a face and a voice to the otherwise silent world.

HUMAN FACE

Mr. Cerez P. Duyo

"I was very ambivalent. I wanted Peperone me. I was afraid I would not be able to take care of Mama very well. Still too young. But Papa had to go. We needed the money for Mama to get well."

Nina's father left and the wouldn't see him for a long time.

"The first few months after Papa left, Mama found the energy to attend to my needs," Nina narrated. "She even engaged in business and opened a sari-sari store. She would wake me and cook for me previously. I adjusted to my new home, school friends, and to Pagsanjan.

"But this did not last long. Mama became increasingly cranky and forgetful. She started to be easily angry with me. Nothing I could do right for her. She blamed me for the unpleasant things that happened between her and Papa. I felt guilty and sad. Maybe she was right. Because of my needs, Papa had to go away to work."

After a while Nina's mother started her habit had stopped sending money and he was having an affair. The financial burden had shifted to Nina's mother. To make a long story short, Nina's mother's sari-sari store failed, and she had spend up to bury and moved to the province.

"One time my mother arrived home from the hospital with papers that had the words HIV and AIDS. Then I realized, I guessed what they meant and she replied, 'Somebody gave me this.'"

Nina's mother went to Manila about the same month, sometimes staying there for more than a week at a time. "I had to isolate myself whenever I was left alone at home. I often wonder why I have been ostracized and acted on my bed, pretending I had enemies or had people to fight and delve away.

"One time, while she was packing her things before leaving for Manila, Mama told to me, 'Nina please take care with me.' I replied, 'Yes, I will.' I did not want to add to Mama's anxieties, so I told her that I was not a nobody and that I was not ashamed of them. But what really went on in my mind that I did not want her to know me. And that I was afraid for her. That night, I prayed so hard that Mama would get well soon and be with me."

"One day Mama finally told me what was ailing her all these years. She also informed her brothers and sisters. They were not much into self for us."

Nina said as Jessica her father. While doing this, she felt that she was a burden to Manila. As her daughter's brothers, things were just so bad. "During many times that she was in the hospital, Mama would let us wander as she would be. She would allow me to go to the mall and to the movies, we hour basis here. Or that it was my fault that my father left us. It hurt, but I knew she was going through an awful time."

"When Mama's friends came he excluded from the hospital to see her, I would hear them say, 'I hope this takes me,' I didn't want to be with my sister and uncles because they didn't seem to like me. I'd rather be alone. I'd like to avoid confiding. Sometimes, I might become a good actor."

After her mother died, Nina was placed in the care of an uncle who had drinking problems and a troubled family life. Nina mentioned her studies until an NGO was able to reach them; my father to me, it was a relief to be with another women who was pregnant with their child.

Nina now lives with them and takes care of the baby.

"At the end," the study on children affected by HIV-AIDS says, "the silence with which these children live is not only silence about HIV and AIDS but also many aspects of their lives... These loudest of silence is because an elder was often do not know the meaning of HIV and AIDS and its impact on their families..."

* * *

Send feedback to cerezpduyo@yahoo.com.ph

Puerto Princesa's concerns

FOR SOME REASON I CAN'T EXPLAIN, TUESDAYS always remind Tarzuelo of the movie "Groundhog Day." The Philippine Airlines passenger's only consolation is the exceptional interiors of the airline's cabin crew and the theatrically tantamount feelings of the flight attendants' welcome. Thus, and like my parents's, new months for pleasurable on the part of PAL. I arrived in Puerto Princesa City 35 minutes early and straightaway to Manila on the dot.

A friend's suggestion that I should "write like a guide" before I arrive, I went there—as Steve Irwin specified it—so my ethos could be done for the Mountaineer Group of Companies and their Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park, Tabon Caves, and the Ulugan Bay. Tarzuelo came up with more precious explanations that, since then, have been in the back seat of my mind as I've been asked by Americans I've met to explain why the remote Philippines is a must-visit destination for foreigners.

The former was meant to share the views of his participants, among them the MD, and Dr. Michael Alba, dean of the La Salle's College of Medicine, and Dr. Jaime Galvez Tan, UP professor, with representatives of various non-governmental organizations, indigenous peoples and the youth.

Leaving Puerto Manila a silence a rewarding exercise, and not only because I got to rest-assured in part of the country only relatives say they what we have to find a way to maximize local initiatives while rebuilding or improving the chain of commercial activities between the national capital region and the rest of the country. Whether the success of the city's ventures don't seem to be removed from Hector Mandal's campaign for the Philippine Tourism Authority to be a progressiveness and a lack of awareness on what to do. While the residents take pride in Mina Palawan, a professor of the Palawan State University's geology nights in the national board seems not

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

to be engineering, they are worried over the drastic housing quality of education overwhelms.

The Malampaya oil/gas field and the mines of major mining activities in the province were the two major industries they cited when asked. Speaking before I arrived, Palawan Governor Abraham Mitra's first Governor like result of an expansive breakdown, an initiative from a Republican current in the country's political system, and the Governor's term in the city. During the 16-40-45 percent sharing of benefits from Malampaya gas production (the largest portion going to the national government), and the 1.5 percent of the benefits the province became same as the former are still awaiting final resolution by the court. Such location had been nothing to by now, until here there is a lot to be done, especially in the area of the province's problems, including the finely equipment of the local power problem. That is remote unelectrified but infested Palawanites.

The other concerns revolved around the division of the province into two. Looking at the province as a map, the upper portion (Puerto Puerto Princesa City surrounded) would be reserved for economics, while the lower portion would be opened up to tourism and the like. Such a division would leave the provincial and city governments are having too much to them, and the organizations of indigenous peoples have joined the fray. Asked for my opinion on the matter, I told them that I was still studying Palawanites have to decide for themselves. As for me, 10 assisted anyone advocating truth about mining in an and see Tabon, Cebu, for themselves. I visited Tubbataha waters this year, asking a remarkably well-organized local Manila-owned, people still can't think that Cebu City Dingras Divisoria), which itself is on the receiving edge of development.

In contrast to the optimism and improvements in the Philippine economy, the political and local governments in San Carlos City (which is making the transformation from the old plantation economy to a modern agricultural and industrial economy), Cebu, is experiencing and feeling pains. As why the drive and the hard work necessary is not when mining companies were only operating there (one the local economy collapsed after the mining investors left, and how thereby has become a dependency on remittances from overseas workers. And as I asked the Puerto Princesa and Bataan residents at the forum what sort of concessions would they be posing in exchange for what the mining companies would be getting from their operations.

Apparently a lot of apple pie in the sky but too much else, judging from the earliest most remarks of the gentlemen who were in the province to invest in the province. Its complained that advertising a license and the various permits required dealing with a number of government offices, and the lack of transparency and accountability, even though he himself claimed connections to a ranking member of the President's official family. He said he was tempted to shut down his operations until he could get all the red tape ironed out.

The two issues, which are vital to the people of Palawan, also illustrate the broader problems faced by the country's Mindanao bilogy. As the island's economy is developed, the issues of how and the national government, as well as the delays occurs of our legal system, which can't quickly and equitably settle disputes. The latter are slowing down the former, and the former is in danger of being summed down in people's dreams, with the attendant substance of local officials, while successful owners that clandestine land pressed to make themselves board or lobby for clearer deal.

'Tindero'

EL SEÑOR DE SOMOZ RAL DIRAC (COMEDY/ROMANCE) OPENING to go with some of my friends to movie recommend. Sun I opted to stay home and forget my stressful and rather tempestuous school life, fixing at home for at least a week is more appreciating for me than having a dip in a pool or going to the beach or somewhere. While going out of town can be a lot of fun, at home I can have peace of mind and learn more lessons that I cannot gain very easily.

Out family owns a small sari-sari store. When I'm home, I serve in the counter. I really like doing it because I enjoy watching different people pass by. And I have even more fun when people on an errand.

I am an introvert. I prefer things I'm not a big fan of watching the behavior of people. So when people drop by the store, I favor discreetly in their conversations and formulate theories about how they would act in certain situations. Sometimes, I imagine how a certain person looked like and how he behaved when he was younger. Other times, I just listen to what they are saying and try to guess what they are thinking. I also like to make the smile to see how happy they appear to be as they talk about things that concern them.

In just two or three days as a tindero, I heard more than a hundred stories. It was not because people were talkative, but rather because I had a captive audience. I got to experience their funny jokes, hear the intensity of their emotions or the speed of their speech. I could tell their dark souls speak of their agony or joy.

One time, two peddlers happened to stop by the store. I saw them approaching with rolls of Bonifacio sleeping mats strapped on their backs. And I knew right away that they were tired. They were sweaty and their feet seemed to swell. They were tired after walking for God knows how many kilometers. I could smell them from several feet away. They looked tired and weary. They did not speak any word as they sat there, taking deep breaths and waiting blankly in the dimly-lit.

I did not ask if they wanted to buy anything. So I knew that all they wanted was to take shelter from the heat of the sun. When they started speaking, I recognized the accent and I knew then that they belonged to an indigenous tribe.

They asked me if they could take a nap on the benches. I automatically said yes, even if I knew that their presence there would keep our customers away, especially the ones who like to chat. And I knew that I would be late, many of those who happened to pass by sparsely wanted to down for a few minutes, wondering who were those two strange looking men lying on the benches.

I was busy surveying to seamlessly when I noticed a woman in uniform to reached, nearby stop by and examined the items that were displayed laid on the table. The way she leisurely impressed by their simple designs. She especially liked one whose edges were adorned with interwoven betels and deep green stripe.

One of the men suddenly woke up from his nap and told the woman she could have the mat for P120. The latter acted surprised and asked why the price was too high. "Pwede PhD sating?" she bargained.

The man gave her a bitter smile and said with a note of condescension, "Eyeweek, mam."

A bit of a pie-war began. She pointed to the other which were narrower and said she was able to buy a mat than was to, saying that it was good for her head. She then left.

"Don't mind them, mam," the man reassured me, and proceeded to compare the qualities of a four-man and a five-man mat. He also said the mat she had bought before might be smaller than the four.

The woman persisted in asking for a bargain, offering to buy two for P200. But the man said he would sell them for P250.

The exchange ended with the woman dropping the issue and leaving with a look of disappointment. The man again went his bitter and pitiful smile.

I could see his frustration and I had expected him to run after her and say she could have two for P200. But the man remained in his place and he was not moved. Interesting. I was following down his unsuccessful trial to sell his stuff.

"Gusto pud ni mamat, sir?" he said quietly. Then he handed me a few instances of how much effort it took to make the mats and bring them to town.

I listened to him and noticed how hard he was trying to make his point. Apparently, he was quite desperate with his smile. But I felt he was dignified in his voice.

The man continued to talk there, wishing for his companion to wake up. He seemed to be pondering something very deeply.

What was he thinking about? I had no way of knowing. I drew pictures of him and his family in my mind. His wife and his children eagerly waiting at their door for his return and for the goodies he would bring to them. I could feel how badly he wanted to make a sale.

Then it was time for them to go. With the bundles of mats on their shoulders, they walked toward the public market, where they would have to ride a tricycle to reach the bypass and where more "tolerated" people could see and examine their products.

As they moved away, the conversation between the peddler and the woman kept echoing back to me. I found it ironic that it was from the simple men that I learned a lesson, and not from the many books I've been to school. It was a simple lesson of respect for oneself and holding virtues in high regard.

When dinner came, I will have to travel again some 72 kilometers to the university Town. I will continue to learn this necessary skills to my chosen field of study. But right at home, in my family, I haven't will continue to learn the values necessary for life.

Arriel C. Infante, 18, is a junior in BS Education major in Physical at the Silay Campus of Manila University in Kennonville, South Cotabato.

THEY SAID

Freedom for all

"I'd like people to see this picture who always want all to be free and wanted it can only be equal. Freedom is for all human beings."

—On the late civil rights icon Rosa Parks whose refusal to give her seat to a white American sparked a movement to end racial segregation in the United States

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GSIS is in better position to provide motorists CTPL

ERNESTO C. ERASMAL, JR. SOR hrm. [1] column, describes the offer of the Government Service Insurance System to cover motor vehicles with Compulsory Third Party Liability (CTPL) insurance coverage as "preposterous."

The target beneficiaries of a CTPL insurance are car owners, the injured public and the government. Under the present system, all these parties are ill-served and defrauded: many accident victims receive endless indemnity. On the other hand, well-meaning owners are left to shoulder the indemnity all by themselves despite having paid for their insurance premiums. [illegible]

At the same time, the government is deprived of taxes due on the insurance premiums: in 2003, for example, according to the Insurance Commission, 4.3 million vehicles were registered. The insurance premiums for that number of vehicles were estimated to P2.3 billion, on which the government would have collected some P276 million in taxes.

However, only P1.1 billion in premiums, or less than one-half of estimated due, were reported by the insurance companies which paid only P63.9 million in taxes. In other words, the government was cheated of P200 million. This also underscores the extent of fraud in the CTPL business. In fact, almost one out of every one CTPL policies is unreported and therefore false. Besides, the present system is chaotic and creates room for tremendous fraud.

The GSIS CTPL proposal will not establish a monopoly. The DTI pursues, historical Insurance Corporation of the Philippines (NHCP), has proved its inadequacies to participate by way of reinsurance.

The GSIS offers an inexpensive, little regulatory system wherein the purposes of premiums for CTPL is incorporated in the registration cost. The GSIS assumes the CTPL coverage and assures payment of claims within 5-10 days from the submission of the adjuster's final report. With P500 billion in assets, the GSIS can easily pay all legitimate claims for indemnity. Besides, it has 40 branches, 8 district offices and 11 satellite offices allows the coverage which are service each district. At the 116 years on premiums, they are commercially inclined to the national government.

Finally, what the GSIS aims to address is the lack of insurance coverage for millions of compassionate drivers and riders. GSIS believes that public safety involves not only legislation and law enforcement but also contingent measures, like an insurance system, preferably supplied by government as the premiums easily tacked with processing and preserving the public welfare.

We respect Gerard's opinion, but we believe that on this matter, he failed to consider all aspects.

—JOSEFINA L. TALLEDA,
senior vice president,
General Insurance Group,
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Betrayal of national interest worse than rape

THE EDITORIAL, "[illegible] 'LITTLE brown brothers'" (PDI, 11/18/05), in my view, should have included the more damning consequence of senator Sotto's Raul Gonzalez's statement.

It is a capsule. An [illegible] act is tolerated the image of a country to obedient to the United States, rendering [illegible] the Philippines' distinction it is independent and a "Strong Republic."

But going beyond that, Gonzalez's crass statement shows our understanding of what sovereignty means and requires, or what a republic stands for. It could as well allow other nations' treatment of our country and citizens (remember the DFA's).

Our justice secretary, by his servile act, inflicted more harm to our country and people than do individuals who allegedly commit the rape.

By washing the presidential obligation of the Philippine court to render justice to one of his aggrieved citizens just so he can serve the interest of a foreign country, Gonzalez not only demeaned and destroyed the dignity of his office, he also trampled on and besmirched the integrity of the country's justice system.

Let us not forget that without a functioning justice system, there cannot be a civilization.

As current as it may sound, Jonathan Swift's [illegible] Satyrs, by heaping Gonzalez in her Cabinet, is to justify of treason as he is.

That Mr. Arroyo would abrogantly reject her own people's interest to curry favor with the United States underscores her unfitness to enjoy the honor and privileges of the office she now holds.

—DONELSO SIMON,
12 Wilhemia Avenue,
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LETTERS

If business, politics mix

WE DO NOT HAVE A PROBLEM with people wanting to raise the profits from their business ventures. Our problem is when businessmen in business run for municipal public office and from here the power and authority derived fund their patronage to advance their business interests.

We, business generators employments, this the citizens should see as a public office the vision person, as investors. They'd be better leaving governance to those who are well-called for it.

What businessmen see in is support those who have the wealth of the Filipino poor to find heaven and keep their business operations legal and productive and beneficial to all aspects economic, social, political, moral, environmental, etc.). We urge business, non-vested politicians to restrain themselves from corrupt practices.

Another thing: although there are politicians who truly have the calling, many of them are attracted by the support of corrupt businessmen around them. These politicians should not submit to the temptations of the latter. They should make sure the country and the people do not get neglected. They should heed by good example and stand up as models of men, honesty and integrity.

In the highest side, congressmen to vie limit and weaken the executive branch, and we all the people who empowered and elected laws and legislators for a perfect observance of this year's All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day in the Philippines.

—FERRETY PE,
mary_ep@hotmail.com

Complaints meant to harass

I WRITE IN CONNECTION WITH the news item titled, "Subway firm sues ex-dear for emails," under the byline of Marlen Ramos. (PDI, 11/28/05)

The criminal complaint for emails, filed by four telecommunications Development Corp. (EDC) against me, were meant to divert attention from an intrigue of rogue, questioning the unlawful, fraudulent transfer and disposition of Strategic Alliance Development Corp.'s (SADC) 18 percent shareholdings in ADC. (I am the controlling stockholder of SADC.)

It was greatly unfair of Ramos to quote executively barrier Beth Tahajlegora' assertions [illegible] which were beyond the allegations in the complaints against me], without making a similar effort to report my refutations of the charges in my counter-affidavit. My refutations are all on file at the prosecutor's office in Pasig City.

Surely, Raul Ramos have objectives enough to examine the records of the 11 times that I [illegible] by Tahajlegora', he would have found out that the complaints were plain harassment suits.

First, Ramos should have learned from SEC's very own plain-affidavits that, contrary to Tahajlegora' claim, the antecedents against me were not suppressed by an audit report from Sycip Gorres Velayo and Co.

Second, Ramos would have known that, contrary to Tahajlegora' claim, I did not make any unauthorized disbursements of SADC funds; that the disbursements were made in accordance with the procedures and standards prescribed by the SEC board of directors in its Resolutions No. 03-03-07 and Resolution No. 03-09-2003; that I was only one of the signatories to the checks in question (and that the other signatories, who are outsiders to example with security), and that the questioned disbursements were lawful advances or commissions, or payments for goods or services rendered, and duly recorded in the books of the corporations.

That the complaints were harassment suits is evident from the fact Tahajlegora' assertions [illegible] complaint against me, herself a client to file multiple complaints alleging incest as a signatory to the questioned checks while standing trial against me in the [illegible].

—CESAR T. QUIAMBAO,
qcambao@philbellnet.com.ph

It is wrong for MC quotations to not only [illegible] but also [illegible] to quote about the charges raised against him by the SEC. In fact, his reply to the charges included in the last part of my story.

Also, I, as a reporter, do not [illegible] to make a judgment on whether the accusations made against him were true plain harassment. I am not a judge. As a journalist, my job is to report the facts, not to speculate when could be behind them.

—MARLEN RAMOS,
correspondent,
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

The Lord's role in success

THE ARTICLE "THE STORY OF money for" (PI) told by [illegible] Sylvester [illegible] (PDI, 11/27/05) was very, very inspiring. Indeed, success is 10 percent inspiration and 90 percent perspiration. Owners such as painters and businessmen are very obvious in her story.

However, she did not mention anything about the power of prayer in successful outcomes.

Since I only [illegible] my life by family members recognize that all they have today come from the Lord.

Let us all thank the Lord for what we get today.

—MS. JOYCE HARI,
Manila, Laguna

Bush's American dream, other peoples' nightmare

THIS IS BECOMING [illegible] Bush's caliph ruled, "Another avenue for Indio rape victim." (PDI, 11/30/05) She contended that the recent Subic rape case would be, among other things, a make-or-break case on the viability of the Visiting Forces Agreements. Likewise, in her column titled, "OMA needs credible opposition to Gloriaduman pose." (PDI, 11/8/05) Belinda Olivares-Cunanan said that the rape case might be used to attenuate the elongation of the VFA.

Rather, however Secretary Angelo Reyes, apparently defending the controversial R.P.-US military training exercise in Western Mindanao, warned that Southeast Asia could be the next battle of international terrorism. But in my opinion, Southeast Asia would be more at risk of [illegible] terrorist attacks due to the presence of American troops in the region, particularly in the Philippines.

According to 60 Sen. Sam Brownback, the Philippines could be the next Afghanistan in the war on terrorism. This is a scary statement, considering what happened in Afghanistan.

The United States' invasion of Afghanistan, just to get Osama bin Laden, evokes images of the dude who burned his house to get rid of a mouse inside. Bin Laden may be an odious, psychopathic murderer, but the end does not justify the means.

But Laden is a murderous tyrant who deserves condemnation by all civilized humanity. However, I'm unable to find the slightest justification for the United States' massive military strikes against the impoverished Afghanistan.

If we are to believe the remarks of Brownback, the dim Gappal group, which has been linked to Bin Laden's al-Qaeda network, can be used as a sloppy excuse for direct foreign intervention, if and when the deployment of American troops here, in the guise of a joint US-Filipino military exercise, is declared unconstitutional. Americo will argue that the deployment of US troops here is within the framework of the global campaign against terrorism.

American policy is driven, as always, by power and greed, sadly the Bush administration is obsessed with the "American dream" of dominating the planet and imposing its ideas on other peoples.

—EMMANUEL I. HAPIT,
House of Representatives Electoral Tribunal,
Commonwealth Avenue,
Diliman, Quezon City

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INQUIRER Southern Luzon
Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Florentino G. Solmirano

Albay townsfolk save last frontier

By Gil Francis C. Arevalo
Malilipot, Albay

THREE YEARS AGO, THE DIVERSE ECOLOGICAL life of Mount Malinao, one of several mountains that form a volcanic chain in Bicol, faced danger due to illegal cutting of trees, hunting, *kaingin* (slash-and-burn) farming and garbage dumping.

The number of species declined and the ecosystem deteriorated in Malinao, 16.5 km south of Albay's capital city of Legazpi, according to people who frequent the place.

That picture changed after the municipal government of Malinao declared the mountain a biodiversity conservation and protected area. The residents, especially those living on the periphery, have joined hands to make it so.

The community response came after a team from the University of the Philippines at Los Baños' Institute of Biological Sciences (UPLB-IBS) conducted almost three years of exploration in Malinao that ended on March 17, 2004.

The team presented its findings to the local community and recommended that all means be exhausted to protect Malinao town's last frontier.

UPLB-IBS professor Arturo Gonzaga said the mountain had a peculiar wildlife habitat. Rare and endangered creatures endemic to its forests were found, and, the team said, pointing out that many of the villagers depended much on the place for livelihood.

Malinao, which means "clear," is part of Bicol's volcanic chain that includes Mounts Mayon and Masaraga in Albay, and Iriga and Isarog in Camarines Sur.

It has intrigued historians and hikers who say that the mountain doesn't actually live up to its name. Clouds often cover its peak, depriving them of a beautiful sight, they say.

Preserved

Three years after the UPLB-IBS team raised its suggestions, the local community has witnessed the success of the Malinao program, involving ecological balance management, information and awareness campaign, implemented by the local government.

Tourism in-charge Cristeta Gonzaga said forest guards had been deployed, a youth brotherhood and a monitoring group had been formed, and an information drive had been launched in the villages.

Barangay Cabul volunteers have apprehended illegal wildlife poachers coming from Legazpi and Tabaco cities.

By helping to protect and conserve the endangered species, the residents have united an interest in the population of wild animals, such as boars, monkeys, flying fruit bats, snakes and native ducks in the mountains.

MOUNT Malinao, a diverse biodiversity site in Albay, is retrieved from environmental ravage through a local government initiative.

Gonzaga also said the people were actively participating in activities to enhance and preserve the mountain's treasures, such as canopy and walkway, bats have been saved although their actual count has yet to be recorded.

As a result of the local initiatives, the Philippine fairy blue eagle and other endangered species, like the Rufus-lores tree-drills (belonging to the *Meiglyptes tenuirostris* family) and 15 other species of birds, frogs and lizards, four species of dipterus, coups and a big number of orchid varieties, have been saved from near-extinction.

"It's a wake-up call for all us here, knowing that all the species are endemic only in Albay. Protecting them is our responsibility that's why we heeded all the recommendations of the expedition experts and the very reason why we [have] come this far," Mayor Emily Bote said.

More explorations

Bote said that aside from programs supported by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the municipal government was spearheading more explorations, especially to the center of the 1,349-meter Malinao, which is believed to have a more diverse and still undiscovered fish population.

She said UPLB might be invited again to assess if the mountain could be considered a national park because of its preserved diverse biological ecosystems. Further explorations, she said, would also enhance the local, eco-tourism program that would provide alternative livelihood for the residents.

Malinao also has abaca plantations in its slopes—the source of local abaca weavers—and other commercial crops in restricted areas.

Community immersion

Gonzaga said that as part of the conservation and preservation efforts, students and environment enthusiasts would be invited to live with the local folk so that they could fully understand the community's role in monitoring and protecting the mountain.

He said the residents would usually tell visitors that in spite of their dependence on resources from the mountain, they were willing to sacrifice to preserve it for future generations.

"We cherished the past, we encourage hiking for a cause, encouraging our youth mountaineering club to guide hikers in seeing the new life of Mount Malinao while educating them about the endangered species dwelling in the mountain," the official said.

"And more than that, we even set up beam positions and offered ear to be part of forming cultural basis to understand why we're protecting this last frontier."

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2005

Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

DOH seeks to quarantine village of meningo victim

MALAYBALAY, BUKIDNON—Health Secretary Francisco Duque yesterday recommended the quarantine of a village here following the death of a 5-year-old boy due to meningococcemia.

Duque made the statement in an interview with DMC Radyo Agong just as his department sent a team of medical workers to check the reported meningococcemia case that caused the boy's death.

In the radio interview, Duque also said everyone who came into contact with the boy should be checked and given immediate medical attention.

Duque also urged residents to actively observe sanitation in their surroundings to prevent the occurrence of meningococcemia and other communicable diseases.

Oneshello Sobejar Jr., who died Sunday morning at the General Santos City Hospital (GSCH) while undergoing treatment, was brought back to his residence in Purok Bungalow in Barangay Luz Illaya in Malaybalay on Monday dawn.

He was immediately buried in compliance with instructions given by doctors at the GSCH.

Dr. Lalaine Calvario, GSCH medical director, confirmed that the patient died of meningococcemia.

Sobejar was the second meningo patient admitted to the GSCH. Late last month, another victim from Polomok, South Cotabato was also treated in the hospital.

The first meningo case was reported in Glan town, this province two years ago. The victim, however, survived.

Calvario said appropriate precautions had been taken at the hospital to prevent the bacteria from infecting other patients and hospital personnel.

On Monday, health authorities in the province visited Luz Illaya village to determine the origin of the disease and distribute medicines to people who were exposed to the victim.

They emphasized the importance of maintaining cleanliness in their surroundings to prevent the outbreak of any disease.

In Davao City, a young girl also died due to meningococcemia on Monday.

Dr. Josephine Villafuerte, Davao City health officer, said the girl showed signs of having the disease when she was hospitalized last Sunday at the Bridgestone Hospital.

The girl, whose family requested health officials that her identity and home address be withheld, died on Monday night, becoming the first casualty in the city in months.

The body was immediately placed in the morgue and quarantined, including the hospital room where the victim stayed and her family's residence. Aquiles Z. Zuasola and Bonn A. Jay-C. Santos, PDI Mindanao Bureau

3 get death for kidnapping

CITY OF MALOLOS—THREE MEN ACCUSED of kidnapping a Chinese-Filipino businessman in 2002 were sentenced to death by a regional trial court judge here on Tuesday.

Judge Cesario Concepcion found Joy Icagoy, Rolando Estrella and Nanelo Salazar guilty of kidnap-for-ransom charges when they abducted Santiomitan Jimmy Ting at Barangay Tia in Meycauayan, Bulacan, on Jan. 8, 2002.

Concepcion sentenced their two companions, Efren Esmero and Danilo Bergonia, to life imprisonment.

Court records showed the group demanded P80 million from Ting's family in exchange for his release.

Ting was held for almost a week in safe houses in Pangasinan and Ilocos Norte.

The suspects met Ting's relatives in different gasoline stations on North Luzon Expressway in Bulacan during his captivity for the gradual payoff of the ransom.

The court said the family gave the suspects P1.6 million before the suspects were arrested in a series of operations in Pangasinan and Ilocos Norte.

Tyrone Ang Sec, chair of the Movement for the Restoration of Peace and Order, hailed Concepcion's speedy resolution of the case.

Ang Sec said the cooperation of Ting's family contributed to the immediate resolution of the case.

In some cases, relatives of the victim refused to coordinate with the police and this would hamper the progress of the case, she said. Cornelio Reyes, PDI General Luzon Desk

InqBox

Question of the Week

Garci's back !
Your message to Garci ?

Senders of short (30 words or less) messages published in Tuesday's InqBox will each receive an "Inquirer Shirt!"

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Bishops tell Defensor: We won't buckle down

By Christel V. Esguerra

INVIGORATED SECRETARY MICHAEL Defensor might just waste his time when he meets with three Roman bishops over logging in the province tomorrow.

Bishop Leonardo Medroso of Borongan said it was even impossible for him and the other bishops in the province to accept Defensor's decision to allow Sta. Ana Wawa Timber's Sta. Ana Timber Corp. (SITC) to cut trees in Bataan's only forest reserve and nature park.

"That will be impossible," he told the bishops on Tuesday night. "There will be no compromise."

Medroso, along with Bishops Jose Advincula of Calbayog and Emmanuel Trance of Catarman, are set to meet with Defensor at the residence of the archbishop of Palo, Leyte tomorrow morning.

Medroso said it was Defensor, a Cabinet secretary now political operator of the Arroyo administration, who had sought the meeting last week.

He said he and the other bishops were expecting Defensor to talk them out of their strong position condemning the secretary's decision.

"We won't be fooled," he said. "This is not just our fight but that of the people of Samar. This is a matter of their survival."

Into this mix, the three bishops, including Bishop Angel Hobayan, Tabaco Diocese bishop of Calabanga, held a press conference collectively condemning the apparent privilege awarded by Defensor to Eusebio.

Eusebio's company has a timber license agreement allowing it to log at 39,770 hectares that fall within the human ecosystem of Sierra Madre (SMNP) and the Samar Island Natural Park (SINP). Samar is one of the world's 200 ecologically richest regions.

"The issue of the DENR recognizing the right of SITC is yet another glaring example of one government with its example of patronage politics," Medroso said.

"I don't understand how on the eve of one year, Sec. Jane Jones Ermita, just turning a deaf ear to the voice of over one million Samarenos."

Eusebio has denied critics of the logging permit to the changes against him, saying he had a right to operate the logging concession because he bought it.

Bataan governor Leonardo Roman of Bataan, a lawyer, said his dividend changes of working the anti-graft and corruption law if it was proven that he used his position to arrange to get the logging permit.

Roman, who headed the once powerful Bataanes of Magsaysa-Ramas, which included the Tanbuenga peninsula, Roman and part of Davao provinces up to the old Kingdom of Tondo, spent a year in a new port of Indonesia, repelled Spanish attempts to invade Sulu and Zamboanga.

ARMM Tourism Secretary Mascona Pangandaman said initiatives are now underway to promote Dimaporo and Lanao del Sur have been made to speed up efforts to get Datu Bukidnon's exact burial site.

The group of researchers, headed, would also use historical records and oral accounts passed down to the generations of Maguindanaoans.

Some say Bukidnon's remains were buried in Barangay Salam in Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao, while others insist that his grave site could be found in Barangay Dansuan in Parang (formerly Sultan Kudarat).

Datu Bukidnon's remains were buried in Barangay Salam in Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao, while others insist that his grave site could be found in Barangay Dansuan in Parang (formerly Sultan Kudarat).

Commander noted, Lanao del Sur

Abunawan Gilang, former ambassador to Saudi Arabia, believes the Lanao graveyard to be "too theistic" and considered the Maguindanao burial site as a "decoy" to deceive enemies.

Gilang's perception was shared by senior advocate Bob Antoni, who said they were covered with temples by supervised excursion tourists to commemorate Kudarat's grave but failed due to strong resistance by Sultanate villagers.

"Every time farmers start digging, chunder and lightning fell lore," said Antoni, quoting accounts from Muslim settlements.

The group said that this is the true trade of land owned by the late Sangguniang Bulandong in Kuwait is now the object of a development study by the autonomous government, according to Pangandaman, the ARMM Executive Secretary.

Lafayette says mine spill not 'a Marcopper'

By Blanche S. Rivera

BAPE-BAPE, ALBAY—AUSTRALian mining firm Lafayette Mining Ltd yesterday maintained that the two mine spills that forced the government to suspend its gold milling operations were "no Marcopper incident."

Lafayette chief executive officer Andrew McEwin made the assertion as the company's three team of experts tapped by the government to investigate the operations of the Bapo-Bapo Polymetallic Project, arrived here yesterday afternoon.

"I think, by any means, you've done what happened, but it's no Marcopper... it's no Marinduque. It's not that magnitude," McEwin said in an interview.

He said the company has established its an extensive rehabilitation of its tailings dam as required by the Mines and Geosciences Bureau to ensure that there will be no repeat of the spill as the resumption of its six-year mining operations.

The Bapo-Bapo project has been blamed for fish kills in the coastal municipalities, after a leachate rules caused a mine spill on Oct. 11, and later on Oct. 19, paved the unauthorized discharge of wastewater to nearby trunks going out to the Pacific Ocean on Oct. 21.

McEwin said Lafayette ordered the Oct. 21 release of wastewater after it became apparent that the lower tailings dam could no longer hold the effluent from the mine tailings and subsequently.

He said this was standard procedure to avoid further damage that could be caused by an even flow.

McEwan's statement contradicted an environmental management bureau report, and the findings of other environment groups that the second mine spill was not an accident.

MGB Director Leo Jasa, who accompanied the team to the mine site, urged the non-government organizations to submit their fact-finding reports to the MGB so these could be validated by the independent team.

"We are not only addressing the Oct. 11 and Oct. 21 mine spills, but also the whole operation of Lafayette," he said.

He said the team would have to go back to the source of Lafayette to check whether these were as efficient as they should be.

The MGB will furnish the independent team a copies of Lafayette's environmental compliance certificate and its environmental protection and enhancement program.

The independent team is composed of Philippine Metals Mining Director of the UP National Institute of Geological Sciences, engineers Jojo Basaro of the Chamber of Mines' environment committee, Jake Fonseda of Lepanto Mines, and Mary Isidoro of Benguet Corp.

They will stop at the Bapo-Bapo mine site until tomorrow for the first phase of their investigation.

Study commissioned on burial site of Filipino Muslim hero

COTABATO CITY—SULTAN DIMAporo may be a home known Filipino hero but his exploits against the Spaniards were drawn into history as one of the greatest episodes in the Filipinos' struggle against colonization.

Now, Sultan Bukidnon has become the object of a modern research that also aims to find out where he was exactly buried after his death in 1671.

Maguindanao Rep. Simeon Datumanong has commissioned a group to locate the exact spot where Sultan Muhammad Dimaporo Kudarat was laid to rest.

"It is but fitting that we give Sultan Bukidnon this honor by researching a shrine with a conversation-making topic as the burial ground," said Datumanong, who considered the task as a tourism project for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

Pampanga execs want patent on lanterns

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—TO preserve the identity and quality of Christmas parols here—known as "Parol San Fernando," local officials want to trademark the products and have them patented.

Councilor Alex Pania, majority floor leader of the city council, said the local government of Pampanga should be protected.

"Many enterprising individuals in other parts of the country have been selling lanterns that seem to be similar to our original designs. Many have been imitating our designs and marketing them... as 'Pampanga parol.' And if the buyers would be made to believe that they're buying authentic Parol San Fernando, they might think that we are producing low-quality lanterns," he said.

Once said at least 3,000 families are involved in the production of lanterns. These products are sold in both the domestic and international trade although some say the city.

The city government opened on Nov. 27 the Lantern Plaza to an initial measure to protect the "lantern" of local interests. The area has several stalls selling Parol San Fernando bearing the official seal of the city.

On Dec. 17, the city will host the annual Giant Lantern Festival, locally known as "Lights Parol."

Giant lanterns, measuring at least 10 feet in diameter, usually made of colorful light bulbs that interplay with music.

Ten villages in the city are expected to participate in this year's event. The city government has given each village P111,000 to produce their entries. The barangay that will bag the first prize will receive P300,000 as needed to make a giant lantern.

Barangay San Felipe won the grand prize in the Lights Parol in the last three years. Ann Marie, PIA Central Luzon Desk

A CRAFTSMAN in Davao City displays the shell of a lantern he made.

Mining executive preaches new waste technology

BACOLOD CITY—A DOCUMENTARY FILM on the contamination of the Abra River allegedly due to chemical leaks from the Lepanto Consolidated Mining Co. (LCMC) in Mankayan, Benguet was launched last week at the University of the Philippines Baguio.

"Subdong Ti Baliktit" (Beyond the "basic gold"), which was filmed by the environmental and advocacy group Tan-aw Media Collective, documented the accounts of people living along the Abra River, whose livelihood was disrupted by spillage from Lepanto's tailings dam.

The 52-minute film followed an investigative mission that was conducted in May by experts from local universities, medical groups and militants. It was financed by the Save the Abra River Movement (STARM).

On Nov. 18, a day after the film's launching, LCMC officials presented participants in the 52nd Mine Safety and Environment Conference a more efficient management system that would help the country's investment in cleaning up the Abra River.

Jake Fonseda, LCMC project development manager, said the firm combined efficient methods of recycling and cleaning effluents to ensure that wastes contained by their tailings dam are no longer harmful.

Fonseda said more mines had phased out a method of cleaning effluents by introducing alkaline chlorine treatments because residual chlorine destroyed marine life.

The said modern mines combined methods that converted cyanide for existing, introduced biological agents to chemically remove water quality, and a natural process of detention to dilute leftover chemicals in wastewater in their tailings dams.

Fonseda said the LCMC process was one such innovation in used many of these accepted ecologically friendly methods of recycling mine wastes.

The film tried to dispute the latest's rebuttal.

"Aside from witnessing accounts of toxic waste and revealing damages to the environment, we were able to listen to the stories of the people living along the Abra River," said Audrey Bolivar, the film's project manager.

Dr. Anita Marie Leung, a DENR convenor, said Abra River's contamination could be detected from the deterioration of rice land and the loss of fish in rivers in Manabapan areas in Benguet and Quirino and Cervantes towns from the East.

"Abra River means so many things to many people. When we watch this film, let us think about the extent of damage, which the Lepanto mine, has caused. The mine has been operating for 69 years, so you could just imagine the extent of damage," Leung said during the film's launching.

Inside Guam, the environmental impact of mine wastes, the film first aired the closure between the company and the Lepanto Mine employees Union, which could take months to resolve.

Beatrice Cal-aroa with a report from Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

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Rev. Moon here today

SOUTH KOREAN RELIGIOUS LEADER SUN Myung Moon arrives in Manila today to launch the Universal Peace Federation, a new global organization of civic and religious leaders dedicated to the making of peace all over the world.

The visit is the 75th leg of a 188-city tour to launch the federation in every continents and region of the world. The tour has already taken the 85-year-old evangelist and his wife to cities in the US, Asia and Europe.

The religious leader will speak to an audience of 3,000 that will include leading Filipino govs, academics, political and civic leaders as well as various clerics of Christian, Muslim and other faiths who have joined Reverend Moon's peace initiatives in the Middle East and around the world.

Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., chair emeritus of the Presiding Council of the Universal Peace Federation, is among the dignitaries attending the event.

Sir, David Kerr, an Anglican priest who helped build the first purpose-built Hindu temple in Britain, a mosque, and several Moon has a message for new generations who do not live any longer in the world of traditional national and religious boundaries."

The Manila will welcome Reverend Moon at the inaugural convention at the Manila Hotel, which starts at 6:30 p.m. today. The signing of the UPF Philippine Declaration, presentation of Ambassadors for Peace awards and a musical presentation by the Hi Hundred Choir will be among the highlights.

The tour began on Sept. 12 in New York.

2 Korean held

TWO KOREAN NATIONALS were held by the Bureau of Customs at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) Tuesday night for attempting to bring out an estimated $1 million in cash in violation of Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) regulations.

At least 14 bundles of cash in $1,000 bills were found in the suitcases and carry-on bags of passengers Kwang Shin Gon and Myoung Kwang Hun at the airport's final security check before boarding Korean Airlines flight KE 0624 bound for Incheon, according to Ben Esquivias, supervisor of the Customs passenger departure division.

Esquivias said that BSP regulations require departing passengers, whether foreigners or Filipinos, carrying more than P10,000 in cash to make a Customs declaration. (Nikko Dizon)

The Daily Gospel

Thursday, December 1, 2005
1st Week of Advent

1st Reading: Is 26:1-6
Gospel: Matthew 7:21,24-27

Jesus said to his disciples: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my heavenly Father.

"So, then, anyone who hears these words of mine [and acts accordingly] is like a wise man, who built his house on rock. The rain poured, the rivers flooded, and the wind blew and struck that house, but it did not collapse because it was built on rock. But anyone who hears these words of mine and does not act accordingly, is like a fool who built his house on sand. The rain poured, the rivers flooded, and the wind blew and struck that house; it collapsed and what a terrible fall that was!"

Commentary:

Are we to be counted among the wise or fools? Jesus said that we build our houses on the rock of the Scriptures, the rock of the Word of God. Jesus is clear in telling us to practice what we preach. Do we have divided hearts, saying and not doing, the world's foundations of greed, self-absorption, competitiveness and violence? And so with changing weathers all that we have dug and dirtied and like a fool we live in a collapsing house? Only two choices: Choose the Word of Justice and truth or all the other words pushing for position—Choose and save your life!

Clarence Hallman Jr., Lifeline 16, CP 10, Taft, Antipolo, Rizal 1870, P.O. Box 4, Antipolo City Central Post Office, 1870 Antipolo City, Rizal, Philippines. Tel. (02) 6466, Fax (02) 7820. E-mail: clarence@lifeline.org.ph. Website: http://www.lifeline.org.ph/Clarence.htm

METRO
Editor Ester G. Dipasupil

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Binondo schools transfer under way

By Tina G. Santos

MANILA CITY OFFICIALS ARE determined to proceed with the relocation of two public schools in Binondo to make way for a housing project despite the opposition of educators and parents of students.

The City Council has already approved a resolution authorizing Mayor Lito Atienza to enter into an agreement with a corporation for the construction and development of a new school complex for students of the Huang Zobayaan and Juan Khail Bautista high schools.

The proposed transfers will be built on the 21,727 square meter property located at the corner of Quintana and Ortigosa streets, San Nicolas, also in Binondo, only a kilometer away from the schools' present sites on La Choumert Street.

Another resolution passed by the council also empowers Atienza to enter into a contract with an investor for the development and construction of housing facilities on the property to be vacated by the schools.

Councilor Manuel Zarcal, who authored one of the resolutions, said the transfer would put the students in a new and modern setting conducive to learning since the new school would have a language proficiency center, a teachers' dormitory, chapel and other amenities.

He assured the students and their parents that there would be no relocation until the new school complex is finished.

Earlier, some school officials, teachers, parents and students backed Atienza's move to stop the project, claiming that the 60-year-old school is one of the last remaining historical landmarks in the city. "The school is already a part of history considering that it was named after a great hero, Chief Justice Jose Abad Santos," said a school official who declined to be identified. Records and teachers also urged city officials to conduct a public hearing or consultation among the affected parties before pushing through with the project.

Atienza had said the project would greatly benefit the city and the people of Manila.

MetroBriefs

Mayor Sanchez innocent!

ROMAN II Lagasca Mayor Antonio Sanchez, who is already serving second life term for murder and rape, has been acquitted along with five cops of the massacre rape filed by the Bureau of Internal Revenue more than a decade ago. Pasig City Regional Trial Court Branch 154 Judge Jaworski Icasiano Jr. acquitted the couple "for lack of evidence." The voluminous documents presented by the prosecution did not sufficiently convince this Court that accused evaded to pay the proper tax," Jaworski said in his 14-page decision. Sanchez, former mayor of Caloocan, Laguna, is serving reclusion perpetua for the rape-slay of Mary Eileen Sarmenta and the killing of her friend Allan Gomez in June 1993, as well as for the killing of a political leader and his son, Rolando and Rolly Cunha in 1995, the same year Sanchez was convicted in the Sarmenta-Gomez case. The government agency accused the couple of trying to evade paying P9,443,923.80 in income taxes for the years 1988, 1990, 1992. But the defense said the couple had already remitted all taxes amounting to P4 million, plus the amounts for "tax liens brought by concerned other aforementioned persons. The income tax in question cannot be assessed to cover those already covered by other amnesty programs and paid for," Jaworski said in his decision. "Standing alone, the documents presented by the prosecution have no leg to stand on," the judge added. — Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

Makati tightens curfew watch

WARNING to minors in Makati City: Eyes may not always be open beyond 10 p.m., you may spend the night locked. Police and barangay officials have reactivated their watch over the city's streets, looking for violators—minors and young adults who violate the city's curfew ordinance. City Hall announced yesterday: "We have instructed our fellow barangay officials and the police to continuously apprehend those who violate the curfew ordinance. We want them home staying out on the streets arrested, and protect them from becoming prey to criminal elements," said Mayor Jejomar Binay. He urged parents to be responsible. The lighter sentences initiated as part of Makati's citywide curfew law are community service, counseling and—for adults—imposing a prison sentence of one day during the holidays. Fines start that from Nov. 1 to 15, 71 minors were rounded up after they were caught outside their houses between 10 p.m. to 4 a.m. They spent the night in detention as punishment. Most of them were from Barangays San Isidro, Guadalupe Nuevo, Pitogo, South Cembo, Rizal, Bangkal, Poblacion, Bel-Air, Sta. Cruz, Kasilawan, Dasmariñas, La Paz, Valenzuela, and Pinagkaisahan. In 1998, the city government received a 1998 curfew ordinance to prevent violence among minors between and gangs. In 2000, the City Council strengthened the curfew ordinance by amending its provisions on fines and penalties. Under the new policy, first time violators face detention within 6 hrs. or P1,000 upfront. The second violation, Third time offenders will have to be detained for 15 days or fined P1,500, or both, depending on the court. — David F. Bulanadi

Cainta police chief relieved

THE DOPLOSSOM a pillbox in Cainta, Rizal three days ago did little damage but it was enough to trigger the temporary relief of a police chief and two of his men. Cainta Police Chief Supt. Gilbert Cruz and two police noncommissioned officers have been relieved from their posts for alleged "operational laxities" in responding to a minor explosion on Monday morning. Police Regional Office Director Chief Supt. Edgar Aglipay said Police Senior Superintendent Reynaldo Parmon said, "We will ensure the independence of the ongoing investigation into the incident, he added. Supt. Pierre Sarmiento has been designated as the town's police chief temporarily. Police said a homemade pillbox exploded at about 5 a.m. Monday in front of the house of election lawyer and former Commission on Elections Regional Director Victor Rogelio Bello III in Cainta. Damage to the house's window grills and windows and left a small crater on the ground, a statement from the Philippine National Police Headquarters in Camp Crame said. It noted that the police response "was very slow" and the man police "failed to call the services of the Scene of the Crime Operation for technical investigation," a violation of police rules. The town police also failed to immediately secure the incident, the statement added. But a Cainta policeman told the inquirer that operatives from the Explosive and Ordnance Division were on the area and investigators also prepared a post report on the incident. — Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

Motorbike theft gang head falls

THE ALLEGED leader of a motorcycle theft syndicate operating in Metro Manila was arrested in Malabon City yesterday morning by operatives of the Philippine National Police Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (PNP CIDG) headed by Chief Insp. Jacob Mascariña identified the suspect as Danilo Ursolino, 36, of this St., Barangay Longos, Malabon City. Seized from him was a firearm and recovered by the PNP Task Force Motor Vehicle Theft Group was part of a six-theft group and an extortion syndicate that operates from the Laguna and Batangas Province area to the Metro Manila area. Ursolino, who is also known as Boy Tuloy, is the leader of the group, the PNP CIDG said. Task force Motor Vehicle Theft Group was part of a six-theft group and an extortion syndicate that operates from the Laguna and Batangas Province area to the Metro Manila area. Ursolino, who is also known as Boy Tuloy, is the leader of the group, the PNP CIDG said. — Reinero Ubanda, "Ten syndicate-type unarmed men on a beat for robbery-carjacking activities using the same modus operandus that could bring an end to their crime," he added. — Nancy C. Carvajal

Taiwanese trader arrested

A TAIPEI drugs and undeclared guns that did him in. The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) yesterday presented to media Taiwanese businessman Chen Chin Hung, 41, who was arrested last week in Makati City for possession of illegal drugs and firearms. Another suspect, Tsung Feng Tung, remains at large. The NBI Criminal Investigation Division (CIDG) raided the suspects' house at 106 Orbit St., Bel-Air 2 Village after receiving reports that the two were involved in gun smuggling. The agents seized 10 rolls of injectible ecstasy, 10 grams of shabu, 2 kilograms of marijuana, three rifles, apart from small amounts of methamphetamine hydrochloride or shabu and marijuana leaves. Special Investigator Glenn Arat of the NBI-CIDG said a roll of ketamine could produce 10 to 15 tablets worth P1,000 each. Also confiscated were a loaded Ingram M-10 pistol, a Caracol rifle, a shotgun with a silencer, six magazines of assorted caliber, 140 rounds of ammunition and three bulletproof vests. Other articles seized by the Taiwan NBI but not the drugs and other firearms. Charges of illegal possession of drugs and firearms have been filed against Chen at the Makati City Prosecutor's Office. — Maynard C. Orlo

UP College of Medicine marks 100th year

THE UNIVERSITY of the Philippines College of Medicine (UPCM) is celebrating its 100th anniversary tonight at the UP Theater in Diliman, Quezon City. All UPCM alumni are encouraged to attend the celebration at 6 p.m. At 10 p.m. a fireworks display will be held at the UP Oblation.

A MIRADE of floats carried as the highlight in yesterday's celebration of the 141st birth anniversary of Andres Bonifacio, the founder of the Katipunan, a secret revolutionary society, at the Bonifacio Monument in Caloocan/Quezon City. — PHOTO

Working class hero remembered

By Oji Yap

IF HE WERE ALIVE TODAY, Andres Bonifacio would be leading a different kind of revolution—one that is both cultural and moral, as well as political.

It is the same way he is remembered by Our Filipinos from the dusty of foreign colonizers, the Father of the Philippine Revolution would seek to liberate them from their weaknesses, according to one of his descendants.

"He would have fought to free Filipinos from their cultural, moral and political bondage," Ricardo Bonifacio, one of the great-great grandnephew of the working-class hero.

In his 142nd birth anniversary yesterday, the Great Plebeian would have been glad to see an independent Philippines, Gregorio Bonifacio said during the ceremonial wreath-laying at the Bonifacio Monument in Bel-monte, Quezon City. "But at the same time, he would realize that we are not totally free," said the 32-year-old Gregorio.

His father, Andres, is the grandson of Gregorio Bonifacio, who was the grandson of Procopio Bonifacio (brother).

"We are still under the dictation of those in power. Many of us are uneducated, and our rights are not being protected," Gregorio added.

City officials, with guest speaker Prof. Randy David and Gregorio, led the celebration of Bonifacio Day highlighted by a parade of floats showing high-lights of the hero's life.

Another guest, Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr., called on Filipinos to search for the truth, just like Bonifacio. "We have to remember the greatness of Bonifacio and must continue to do so," he said.

David, a sociology professor, said history was rife with instances similar to the Supreme Convention where the sisters of Bonifacio were elected instead of the crucial order. "This is a shame that means throughout our history: to keep us the masses here no voice in the national discourse, and while social leaders like Bonifacio challenged of the elite, perhaps Bonifacio's soul may never rest," he said.

With a report from Nancy C. Carvajal

Fire hits building; P15M lost

By Jocelyn R. Uy

A 6HR INTERMITTENT BARRAGE yesterday morning, fire struck a building housing residences and commercial establishments in Pembagar City and destroyed P15 million worth of goods and property.

BFSC Tenderson Geraldino told the Inquirer that the fire broke out shortly before 6 a.m. in the building located at 8087 Kalibasan Road corner Quirino Avenue in Barangay San Dionisio.

It started in the second floor, in the residence of Julie's Bakeshop which contained plastic ware and other equipment. "The blaze started just as the bakeshop was opening for business yesterday," he said.

At 7:09 a.m., it had spread to an eight-door residential complex and other commercial establishments which included a shoe boutique, a drugstore and a beauty parlor.

The fire was put out at 10:05 a.m.

About 36 families were left homeless. Fortunately, no one was reported killed or hurt, authorities said.

Its added that the fire spread quickly as the roof of the building, said to be owned by a certain Antonio Rivera, had no concrete partitions which could have spared the other units.

Fire investigators have yet to determine the cause of the blaze.

Court junks MMDA terminal closure motion

THE METROPOLITAN MANILA DEVELOPment authority (MMDA) has suffered a setback after a Manila court closed part on its earlier decision that ordered the government to order the closure of provincial bus terminals.

Judge Glenda Pamplin Jr. of Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 26 has turned down the MMDA motion for reconsideration, saying he found no cogent reasons to reverse the order he issued last Sept. 8.

Pamplin earlier issued Executive Order No. 179, which was enacted upon the recommendation of the MMDA, declaring the closure of the terminals along major thoroughfares as "unconstitutional" and "inconsistent with the legal provisions of the Public Service Law."

"The motion for reconsideration filed by the MMDA through the Office of the Solicitor General, with petitioners filed by petitioners Victor Transportation Co. Inc. and Mercury Transportation System Inc., is hereby denied," Pamplin said in his one-paragraph ruling.

The court ruling has further derailed the MMDA's recent Manila Mass Transport System (MMTS).

The traffic congestion project intends to centralize provincial bus stations by having just one northern and one southern provincial hubs. — Rina G. Santos

Country a model of judicial reform? Ha! Ha!

THE COUNTRY'S JUDICIAL SYSTEM IS NOW winning recognition as a role model of judicial reforms, said Associate Justice Artemio Panganiban.

Justice Panganiban was probably joking when he said that at the sidelines of the International Conference and Symposium on Judicial Reforms at the Shangri-La Hotel in Makati City.

Or perhaps the jurist and lawyer panel, panic in the conference were just being generous and diplomatic to their host country that's why they said they recognized the Philippines as a model of judicial reform.

For a model of judicial reform the country is not. For from it.

Results of a survey on the country's legal system condemned in August by the Social Weather Stations showed most lawyers had issues being the judicial system.

Of the 460 lawyers interviewed in Metro Manila, Baguio, Cebu and Davao cities, 49 percent said they were "aware" of judges in their localities who received bribes from litigants.

If some judges and prosecutors are not corrupt, they are incompetent.

Take the case of Jeff Quesada, a quadriplegic, meaning he can't move his hands and feet without help. In short, a complete paralytic.

Quesada has been languishing at the Bulacan Provincial Jail in Malolos after being charged with rape.

The prosecutor and judge handling the rape case, both in-side, apparently would not tell a paraplegic from a "normal" person. The prosecutor thought the rape case in court without first looking at Quesada's condition.

The judge continues to hear the rape case. She has not granted Jeff's petition for bail because according to this—his private sleuth the help of my public service program, "Tuesday nights Talks."

I should not be writing about the merits of a case already being heard by the courts. I risk being held in contempt by the court and jailed for it.

But I take exception to Jeff's case.

One doesn't have to be a rocket scientist to know that it is humanly impossible for him to have forced himself on a woman.

The woman said that he held a gun on her during her supposed ordeal. But Jeff can't even hold a spoon, much more a gun.

Jeff has to be bodily carried from his wheelchair to the bathroom to answer the call of nature.

Even if he managed the lady judge has exhibited herself from the case. But the judge to whose sala the case had been transferred has pushed up where the original judge left off.

ON TARGET
RAMON TULFO

The result is that I'm now being blamed by Jeff's parents for their son's continued misery. Why do I keep hitting the judge and jeopardizing their son's application for bail?

But the problem of whether Jeff should be acquitted or convicted is no longer the issue. The issue is why Jeff, a complete paralytic, has been charged with the impossible crime of rape.

The case the Court Administration, an office under the Supreme Court that receives complaints against judges, has read about Jeff's plight in this space or probably watched it on my TV show.

Why hasn't the Court Administrator acted upon prods (to use the legal language) to act on on its own initiative to inquire from the judge about the absurdity of Jeff's case?

* * *

A former policeman who shot and killed a jeepney driver three years ago has been sentenced to life imprisonment.

Judge Ramon Cadilla of the Cebu Regional Trial Court found ex-PO3 Guillermo Wapilo guilty of the murder of Edgar Bernaldez of Pangdan City. Eva Bitoli Justice has been arrested in Davao City and brought to Cebu. The circumstantial has never been identified.

It's impossible for Wapilo to have acted on his own. He didn't have any motive.

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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2005
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
B1
BUSINESS

HSBC exec has high hopes for RP economy

Bank confidence comes in the form of investments

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE CHAIR OF BRITISH BANKing giant HSBC continues to have high hopes on the Philippines, but he tempers this perception by saying that the country may soon to even greater heights if the people will only give themselves a little more credit.

Vincent Cheng, the first Asian to be appointed as the helm of HSBC, was a former legislator and Cabinet adviser in Hong Kong. He said that the Philippine economy has all the ingredients of a success story.

Cheng, who was in town Tuesday for the celebration of HSBC's 130th year of operations in the Philippines, told the business that the bank is showing its vote of confidence in the country by bringing in more investments.

"I'm very confident in the Philippines, but I want you to think you Filipinos give little credit to yourselves," Cheng said. "You criticize yourselves too much."

Cheng said that the economy should already have been a success, considering that the country has "people who are highly educated, and have the confidence of the international community."

"You also have the entrepreneurs, you have the professionals and you also have the capital," he said. "You have huge remittances coming in."

He said an outsider looking in would have a different perception on how things actually work in the country.

"Sometimes only bad news travel," Cheng said, referring to economic setbacks in the country last year. "Good news don't travel as fast."

Asked whether he was worried about the political climate in the country, he said: "I think the measures taken by the government had gained the confidence of the international financial community ... interest rates have come down so we see that the government is taking steps to address imbalances in the economy."

The Philippine government is in the midst of fiscal consolidation.

The implementation of a reformed value added tax law is essential to be enacted in the effort to wipe out the deficit within the decade.

"We've been in Singapore for almost more and expand our business here, put up more branches if we're allowed to and hire more

TOP GUNS

Vincent Cheng (4th from left), chairman of HSBC Asia-Pacific, shares a light moment with CNN's Lorraine Kuhn (5th from left) and some of the top guns of Philippine business (from left): Tony Tamayo, secretary of justice, Washington Sycip of SGV & Co., Jaime-Augusto Zobel de Ayala of the Ayala Corp., and Henry Sy Sr. of the SM Group of Companies.

BIR aims to collect P2B from tax delinquents

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE aims to collect P2 billion in additional taxes through a newly implemented program that establishes a compromise settlement for tax delinquents.

Under the Enhanced Voluntary Assessment Program (EVAP), qualified individuals and companies that have unpaid tax liabilities from 2004 and prior years would be free from possible criminal suits and prosecution by the BIR if they voluntarily pay their back taxes, the amount of which may be adjusted.

BIR Commissioner Jose Mario Buñag said EVAP was in line with the revenue agency's newly adopted policy of promoting voluntary compliance among taxpayers. This he said relieves the BIR of administrative costs entailed in conducting tax audits and filing of court charges.

The EVAP is an expanded version of the Run-Rate Program (TRAP), which only covered unsettled VAT (value-added tax) liabilities.

EVAP covers all tax types—VAT, income tax, percentage tax, excise tax, documentary stamp tax, withholding tax, estate tax, capital gains tax, etc.

"This is more effective than the NAPE because it has an expanded coverage, and so more taxpayers would be encouraged to join," Buñag said at the inference of "Finance Night" organized by members of the Manila Overseas Press Club.

The BIR decided to adopt EVAP after the bureau failed to generate the expected amount of revenues from its no-audit program. The bureau said the previous program was not able to draw in the desired number of delinquent taxpayers.

The BIR originally expected to attract 100,000 tax delinquents to apply for the NAPE but the actual number of applicants only reached slightly above 2,000.

According to BIR, taxpayers who have already been accepted to EVAP need not apply for EVAP to avail of the multi-multi-vacation exemptions.

Revenue Regulations No. 18-2005,

OFW earnings still main growth driver

THE BILLIONS OF DOLLARS SENT back to the Philippines by its huge overseas work force continues to be a major driver for growth in the services sector, a senior official said yesterday said.

Overseas Filipino workers sent home a record $7.9 billion in the eight months to August, according to Economic Planning Secretary Augusto Santos.

Such remittances are at an "all-time high and projected to hit $10.3 billion for the whole year," Santos said. "The amount does not include money sent outside the banking system."

He said families of overseas Filipino workers appear to be saving more of the funds sent home and, while this may have accounted for some of the slowdown in the economy in the third quarter, it bodes well for future demand.

Economic growth slowed to 4.1 percent in the three months to

WHAT'S INSIDE

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BPO revenues seen hitting $10B by 2010, study says B3
Japanese firms now more confident in RP B6

Peso sheds some gains, closes at 54.15:$1

Traders expect exchange rate to remain favorable

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO GAVE UP SOME gains yesterday after breaking into the 53-$1 level last Tuesday as the currency's strengthening against buying opportunities for corporations in need of US dollars.

Currency traders, however, said the market was still expecting an upmove, as the peso hit an intra-day high of 53.89 before closing at 54.15 as the Philippine Dealing System ended yesterday.

The volume traded reached $40.5 million.

The intra-day high of 53.89 yesterday was stronger than the 53.91 posted on Tuesday, when the peso surged at the trader's up cs to settlement from previous Philippine workers over the long weekend.

Some banks scrambled for US dollars to replace those they previously borrowed for a short sale.

"Short covering pushed the dollar higher," said a trader with a local bank. "With the strong close of the dollar, there's scope for it [dollar] to go up to P54.20 or even P54.30 tomorrow," he said.

Companies in need of dollars for their importation and foreign debt repayment took advantage of the lower than P54 to $1 exchange rate.

There were suspicions that the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas might have sold dollars at 54.15 yesterday to tame the exchange rate movements.

One trader said the BSP seemed to be using to limit the fluctuation to about 20 centavos.

But last Tuesday when the peso shot up to the 53 levels, some traders said the BSP was tempted to purchase some dollars from the open market to limit the recession and stop the local currency from appreciating "too fast, too soon."

But Teyangco said the peso would likely trade in as high as 53 or even lower.

Aside from the OFW factor, he said higher investments due to positive results announced following the Nov. 1 implementation of the expanded value added tax contributed to fill market sentiment.

SM mall opens in China

SMALL TYCOON HENRY SY SR. has expanded his operations in China, opening recently his second mall in Fujian province in the southeastern coast of the country.

Sy said the during a roundtable discussion at HSBC's 120th anniversary celebration, where he was honored as among the country's four business greats.

The new 173,000-square-meter mall is located in Jin Jiang City in Fujian province.

This is the Sy family's second SM mall in Fujian province. The first, located in Commercial Mall in Xiamen, was opened in 2000.

The youngest daughter, Jennifer Sy, said the SM group was still studying whether the ventures in China would be folded into the publicly-listed SM Prime Holdings.

"The China project is very new, we have to make sure it will bring in income before we fold it in," Sy said.

SM Prime is the country's largest mall operator with 21 super malls and complexes located nationwide with a total gross floor area of 3.7 million square meters.

SM City San Lazaro opened on July 15 followed by SM Supercenter, SM Seven Annex and SM Supercenter Molino.

SM Prime is scheduled to open Mall of Asia, its most ambitious project, in February. The mall sits on a 60-hectare property overlooking Manila Bay. The mall is designed to become not just the Philippines' biggest, but also the most complete and innovative shopping complex.

The 391,000-square-meter complex consists of four buildings linked by elevated walkways. These buildings will feature a wide array of stores and venues for dining, entertainment, leisure, arts and culture. Ellen Hold G. Sanchez

HSBC exec has high hopes for RP economy

From page B1

people," he said.

Our indication of HSBC's optimism, Cheng said, was its choice of the country as its regional business processing hub.

The bank last June opened a five-story, 40,000-square-foot office for group backroom operations servicing its Alabang.

"If we didn't have the confidence on the economy, why did we put our processing centers here?" Cheng asked. "The cost could be lower in other countries. The fact that we have built our processing centers here and we're considering another one shows our confidence."

"We're very pleased with the efficiency, with the service. It underlines the quality of labor you have in the Philippines. I went there and listened [to the calls], it's amazing!"

Cheng, who has been working for HSBC for 26 years, met with Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. and got a confirmation that things were going well in the meltdown.

"When I started working in HSBC in 1979, it was more a regional bank trying to expand into the mainland," he said. "It was much smaller then, but of course today, we're a global player, located in more with 255,000 people and operations in 277 centers."

"We were quite small in the Philippines then, but now we've grown our business," Cheng added.

Born in Hong Kong in 1940, Cheng grew up in a working class neighborhood. Over the last three decades, he built up a banking career that catapulted him from chief economist to chief financial officer of HSBC subsidiary Hong Kong Bank.

Shares ...

From page B1

gainers outnumber losers 46 to 41, while 51 stocks were unchanged.

Astro del Castillo, First Grade Holdings managing director, said final managers may have taken into account economic data released by the government Tuesday, showing slower-than-expected third-quarter GDP growth of 4.1 percent, compared to 6.3 percent for the same period last year.

Tuesday's data also showed personal consumption expenditure expanding by 4.8 percent in year in the third quarter, slower than the 5.1 percent posted in the same quarter of 2004. AP

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*HIPAA - Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
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Aureos bullish on Pancake House

By Christine A. Saylo-an

VENTURE CAPITAL FIRM AUREOS DAIL is a bullish on the prospects of its investment in food company Pancake House Inc.

Aureos Capital and Masters Development Partnership bought P4 million worth of common shares in Pancake House.

This was the first investment done by Aureos Capital through its Aureos Southeast Asia Fund (Aseaf) that seeks to invest in fast-small and medium enterprise development in developing countries, Aseaf regional managing partner Liam Cully said in a statement yesterday.

"Our investment in Pancake House reflects our strong belief that the Philippines is an attractive investment destination," Cully said. "Aureos seeks to add value to its investee companies, and this early, we have already received inquiries from our other offices on the feasibility of bringing the Pancake House chain overseas."

Aureos Capital is a joint venture between CDC Group Plc., owned by the British government and the Norwegian investment Fund for Developing Countries, owned by the Norwegian state.

"The restaurant sector in the Philippines is particularly resilient and that Pancake House is uniquely positioned to capitalize on the sector's continuing growth," said Samuel D. Gomba Jr., Aureos country manager.

The proceeds of the investment were used by Pancake House to fund the acquisition of a 70 percent equity interest in an online ordering brand, Delyadz Boy, according to Pancake House Inc.'s president Mario Lamoste.

He noted that Pancake House has been considering to strengthen in the casual dining business in the Philippines over the last two years.

BPO revenues seen hitting $10B by 2010, study says

By Konrad W. Domingo

LOCAL INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY-enabled service providers expect the multibillion-dollar industry to grow further after cornering markets worth some $1.25 billion in 2004.

Citing a recent study conducted by consultancy firm McKinsey & Co., Trade Secretary Peter D. Favila said industry experts expected revenues to increase to some $5.6 billion by 2010.

To keep the momentum, Favila said the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions was preparing for the biggest e-services Philippines trade show and conference to be held in February 2006.

The two-day fair was expected to attract some 10,000 local delegates as well as visitors from the United States, Europe and the rest the Pacific region.

He said about 100 IT and IT-enabled product suppliers and service providers exhibitors were expected to take part in the ISP 2006.

According to the DTI, there were at least 120,000 firms that employ 112,000 workers in the country.

"The Philippines is now rank only to India as the top global destination for BPO," Favila said.

The Mapping Offshore Markets Update conducted by outsourcing consultancy Neo IT this year indicated that the country's offshore BPO market size reached $800 million in 2004 while its IT outsourcing market was pegged at $100 million," he added.

"Now that we are gaining recognition as an attractive IT and ITES source, it is important that we maintain our and reinvigorate efforts to promote local IT and IT-enabled companies so the Philippines goes for a big, get share of the outsourcing market," said Cisco executive director Felicisimo Agustin Reyes.

Con Com in Northern Mindanao

(Inside) page 2

THE CONSTITUENT COMMISSION headed by Mel Senen Sarmiento, together with Commissioners Oscar Rodriguez, Gov. Jose Bello, Liberato Laus, Gov. Pedro Rodriguez, Dr. Emmanuel Angeles and Bishop Efraim Tendero, went to the northern part of the island to get the Mindanaoans' views on the proposed shift in the form and structure of government, national parliamentary and economic reforms.

The consultation in Cagayan was attended by representatives from non-government organizations, business, politics, unions and industry groups from Cagayan de Oro, Iligan, Camiguin, Butuan, Surigao, Lanao del Sur and Misamis Oriental.

They were personally welcomed by Cagayan de Oro Vice Mayor Michel Tagarao Apuro who cited the presence of the panelists as in the constitution was an expression of love and hope for the country.

The workshop on the structure of government, which was chaired by Commissioner Bedia F. Bermudez, resulted in a consensus that the country should shift to a federal structure.

They believed that federalism would result in greater autonomy for Mindanao since the areas would now have full control of their resources.

Just like in the Bicam consideration, the issue about the dictatorial and controlling stance of "Imperial Manila" continued to be raised.

Jojit Noguera-Bilyen

With still train, the states can now decide for themselves what should be done, instead of the national government deciding for them.

It was also noted that the country now composed of people with different values and orientation whose needs can best be served under a federal form of government.

But more significantly, everyone agreed that federalism would bring about sustainable peace and development to the island.

The workshop on the form of government was chaired by Dr. Emmanuel Angeles and facilitated by Commissioner Oscar Rodriguez.

Their discussions included the tussle between Congress and senate, situation in regions, increase in provinces during elections, the Bangsa Moro problem and the lack of an ideology among political parties in the present presidential system.

The discussions ended with the majority of the participants agreeing to support moves to shift to a parliamentary form of government.

The workshop on National Backbone and Economic Reforms was handled by Commissioners Laus, Tendero and Sarmiento.

On the issue of exploration, development and utilization of natural resources, the consensus was to lift the citizen requirement for the promotion the Constitution, provided that safety nets shall be enacted by Congress and that the indigenous peoples and the local community share in the profits.

They also strongly advocated that foreigners, including those married to Filipino citizens, should not be allowed to own residential, commercial nor industrial lands, but rather limited to leasing property.

The general sense was to retain the sharing of ownership (60 percent Filipino, 40 percent foreign) in the operations of public utilities for national security considerations.

Mass media operations must still be 100 percent owned by Filipino since media has such a strong influence on our morals, culture and our laws.

Cpl. Rajah Blue is a strong advocate for federalism; she chair of the Mindanao Commission of Women and National Committee chair of the Mindanao NGO Alliance for Export Development Council; chair, Jay Ilagan Foundation; former chair of the Mindanao Business Council. Email comments to jojbiar2@yahoo.com)

OFW earnings continue . . .

Previous page B1

September from 6.2 percent to the second quarter, the government said Monday.

The increase accrue, however, grew 6.1 percent in the three months to September, with the financial sector contributing 1.61 percentage points to that.

The services sector also accounts for 46.1 percent of the

BIR . . .

Previous page B1

already soared on the BIR website, stated the required amounts of computer tax payments for one to avail him self/herself of the benefits of EVAT.

Those who have overdue income tax liabilities, for instance, should pay P10,000 or an amount 20 percent higher than their previous income tax payment, whichever is higher, to avail themselves of the tax amnesty and promotion exemptions.

The regulations covering EVAT however, ensure that individuals and companies that have already been given favorable assessment notices, along with those already charged under the Run After Tax Evaders (RATE) program and those who have pending fraud cases with the Department of Justice prior to the application date of the EVAT law, are disqualified from the compromise program.

Tiger Airways to continue Macau flights

By Clarissa S. Batino

TIGER AIRWAYS PTE LTD, A LOW-cost affiliate of Singapore Airlines and Inter-Asi has received the go-ahead from the Civil Aeronautics Board to continue its Singapore-Macau-Clark flights in December pending a permanent authority.

The aviation board said it would decide on Tiger Airway's petition for operational permit before the end of the year.

The budget carrier started its Macau stopover flights on Oct. 30 until its provisional authority lapsed yesterday.

Tiger is now flying 3-4 times a week from Singapore to Clark from only three flights weekly when it started landing on the former American military base in April, the same time that Malaysia's Air Asia started servicing the Kuala Lumpur-Clark and Kota Kinabalu-Clark routes.

The CAB had also granted a 30-day temporary permit to Thai AirAsia for its Bangkok-Macau-Clark flights.

The Thai unit of Malaysia's AirAsia was supposed to launch its inaugural flights today but it was delivered.

Tiger and Thai AirAsia's routes fall under the fifth freedom right, which is permitted in some of the country's bilateral aviation deals.

Local carriers opposed the Macau stopover of the low-cost airlines but failed to convince the CAB to disapprove the applications.

YOUR CONNECTIC
JOB Market

Power distributors told to secure supply contracts

By Abigail L. Ho

TO PROTECT CONSUMERS FROM PRICE fluctuations, the Energy Regulatory Commission has ordered distribution utilities to enter into bilateral power supply contracts with power generators.

ERC Resolution No. 11 states that distribution utilities should forge contracts with power suppliers to ensure sufficient electricity supply, in preparation for the commercial implementation of the wholesale electricity spot market (WESM).

The ERC said this would also serve as one of the safeguards that would ensure competition, and prevent monopoly and market power abuse.

The contracts, though, should be pursuant to the provisions of RA 9136 or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 (EPIRA), particularly Sec. 45, which provides safeguards against market power abuse and anti-competitive practices.

Under Sec. 45, distribution utilities can source not more than 50 percent of their supply from affiliated firms.

Also, for the first five years from the establishment of WESM, power distributors have to source 90 percent of their requirements through bilateral supply contracts and 10 percent from the electricity bourse.

Contracts between electricity distributors and power producers will also help encourage investments in the generation sector.

Shakey's Pizza Asia Ventures Corp. and the Lopez-led Manila Electric Co., the country's largest power distributor, are not even discussing the possibility of entering into a bilateral supply contract as they bear yet to resolve a dispute regarding their expired 10-year supply agreement.

The result, Napocor and Meralco entered in to a 10-year power supply contract in 1994, which stated that the Lopez-led firm should draw 60,000 million kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity from Napocor, with a minimum 3,600 megawatts (MW) starting 2003.

However, since power demand as projected by Meralco did not fully materialize, energy offtake from the state firm fell below the agreed volume.

The Energy Regulatory Commission has yet to settle this particular dispute, although it recently issued a decision resolving the two firms' row over their transition supply contract. Under this, Meralco was required to terminate on a monthly and daily basis its total system demand.

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See print ads and flyers for complete details.

Japanese firms now more confident in RP

Rating seen to further improve

By Ramon W. Dominguez

JAPANESE INVESTORS' CONFIdence in the Philippines, although still negative, slightly improved in November, the Japan External Trade Organization (Jetro) said.

A survey conducted by Jetro showed that the confidence level among Japanese firms operating in the country improved last month to -0.6 rating from -1.7 in October.

Jetro reported that Japanese companies and affiliates doing business here kept a negative diffusion index for the country for the past seven consecutive months.

Still, the agency said "the absolute values of the negative figures for the Philippines have been decreasing."

The survey aims to provide up-to-date information on business conditions in Asian economies to help companies develop more effective business strategies.

Jetro polls the companies to measure year-on-year changes in their business outlook for the current month and the next two to three months. The answers are expressed as DI, which is the difference between the ratio of positive and negative responses.

Firms were asked to compare earnings prospects, supply and demand, inventory, sales prices and accounts receivables with those in the same period a year earlier.

The Philippines rated negative in the 18 months from June 2004, when Jetro started the monthly poll. The country's record bottomed at -40.9 in December 2004 and peaked at 22.9 in September 2004.

In the latest survey, Jetro said the country's ratings reflected the overall sentiment for the five original members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which "improved slightly" with a rise of 7.1 points.

Business sentiments rose in Singapore and Malaysia and the Philippines, while those in Indonesia and Thailand declined.

Jetro said the outlook DIs for two to three months ahead climbed in all five countries compared to November last year.

The outlook for the Philippines discard that business sentiments would further improve to a rating of -3.

JOB Journal

ER PEOPLE BETTER JOBS

A TRIPLE treat of good food, fast service and radical ideas /C2

LIFESTYLE

Editor Chiela Bernal-Formoso

MONDAY ARTS & BOOKS • TUESDAY FITNESS • WEDNESDAY 2BU • THURSDAY FOOD • FRIDAY FASHION & BEAUTY

The taste of the sea, the color of money

Many legends surround the world-famous Oysters Rockefeller

Reggie Aquino

I HAVE RECENTLY TRIED Lorenzo's Date Bars. They're delightfully delicious! You must call 8527798.

Back to your fish questions... Again, thanks Dingding for all the help!

What are seabass, monkfish and cobbler? Are they local fish?

ARNAB

No, they aren't actually. Chilean seabass – neither is it a bass nor from Chile. This is the Patagonian toothfish caught in the Antarctic (what the silkworm) and called Chilean seabass because it was first landed and discovered in Chile.

Monkfish is big headed ugly fish sold more for its tail meat. Called the poor man's lobster, it has a solid lobster-like texture and very white meat. Genus dory and White Shoes rabbit are from the Pangasius catfish family grown in freshwater ponds in Vietnam. Prudent to presumed only from five star tasteful and bird price to following. If bought from unreliable supplier, taste could be muddy.

What about tulingan? What's the English name for it? Thanks for the very informative list of Tagalog to English names!

PRINCESS JOCSON

Hiap jack mas a tulingan. The bigger tuliganin is tombocol.

What is Oysters Rockefeller? Can I have oyster recipes, please?

MAFEN

The dish was invented by Antoine Alciatore of the world famous restoire's Restaurant in the French Quarter in New Orleans, Louisiana. It was said it originally contained of some 10 ingredients, using watercress instead of spinach and no pepsi. Among the other dishes that Antoine's made famous were Sardou, named after Victorien Sardou, a famous French dramatist (poached egg with artichoke hearts, ham, artichokes, truffles and hollandaise sauce), and Pommes de Terre Soufflés, puffed potatoes and Escargots a la Bourguignonne.

When Jules Alciatore took over the business, two factors made him decide to use gulf oysters instead of escargot—difficulty in acquiring the snails and the changing tastes of their clientele.

According to books and Antoine's website, Jules Alciatore was the father of cooked oysters, as they were hardly ever served cooked before his time. The original and exact recipe for Rockefeller was said to have gone to the grave with Jules.

Many legends surround the world-famous Oysters Rockefeller. Some say it was a customer who said they tasted as rich as Rockefeller, referring to "Rio" John D. Rockefeller. And Rockefeller, then being the richest man in the world, was being associated with the color green, the color of the dollar, which happened to be the actual color of these world-famous baked oysters.

There are many variations of this recipe and here's one of them. I am throwing in additional recipes so you may truly enjoy the experience of eating these wonderful things called oysters.

Bon appetit!

Oyster Rockefeller

18-24 pcs large fresh oysters on the half shell
2 tbsp Italian parsley, minced
3 tbsp green onions, minced
1 tbsp celery leaves, minced
4 tbsp watercress, minced
4 tbsp spinach, blanched and squeezed dry
4 fresh tarragon leaves
½ c fresh French bread crumbs
1 c softened butter
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
Tabasco, to taste
2 tbsp Pernod, Herbsaint or absinthe (liqueurs available at wine shops, delis and specialty stores (optional but better with)

Arrange oysters on a bed of salt. Mix ingredients well until blended and spoon generously over oysters.

Bake 350° F until leaves curles and edges of oysters begin to curl up. Serve immediately.

With Cucumbers and Shallots:
18-24 pcs large fresh oysters on the half shell
3/4 c vinegar, chilled
1 tsp fresh lemon juice
2 tbsp chives, chopped
Salt and pepper

Lay oysters on a bed of ice. Blend lemon juice to a blender until "churches" sometimes.

Combine rest of the ingredients in a bowl. Spoon mixture over ice until oysters. Do the sauce just before serving.

With Fresh Fruit Salsa:
18-24 pcs large fresh oysters on the half shell
½ c apple, minced
2 tbsp each of fresh cilantro and mint leaves, minced
½ c mango, minced
½ c papaya, minced
1 tbsp jalapeño, chopped
2 tbsp shallots, minced
1-2 tsp sugar
1 tbsp lemon juice
1 tsp horseradish
Tobasco, optional
2 tbsp olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste

Lay oysters on a bed of ice. Combine the rest of the ingredients in a bowl.

Chill salsa for three hours. Top oysters with fruit salsa.

E-mail the author at reapinc@inquirer.com.ph

ASSORTED sashimi served at Sake San

ARKIPELAGO serving of sugpo in yolo

TODAS Ayeth, fish cooked Thai-style

Coming full circle

The Triple V group targets the younger diners as it opens its Filipino restaurant Arkipelago and its Japanese restaurant Sake San at the RCBC Tower

By Michaela Fenix

IT WASN'T INTENTIONAL BUT THE circular shape of the food court or ampitheatre of Triple V at the RCBC Tower in Makati positively described the company's coming around to the original full-service restaurant concept of its two flagships, Kanayan and Inasal.

The restaurant menus have been changed, however. Because Inasal is now identified with rice, all your sans-Japanese food, the name had to be changed to Sake San. And because Kanayan on Pinaty Road has retained its traditional Filipino cooking menu, the Filipino food restaurant is now called Arkipelago to distinguish its new style of cooking. That means a faster way of doing the dare-to-be tastes, for instance, briefly sizzling from seconds less...and this was understood... preserving the flavors.

Arkipelago and Sake San are now somewhat over if the visitor see difference it was pointed out that both countries are archipelagos and the ceiling designs emphasizes that fact. It has metal cutouts for the air conditioning which look like islands. But while there is the return to the original concept, the look and the menus in both restaurants are geared towards customers a generation younger than those when Triple V restaurants started. Also, those who are now in charge of the restaurant group belong to the next generation.

The new restaurants are just two sections of the circle. The biggest part is the Triple V fast food section where the second assembler during lunch. It is accessed according to several kinds of cuisine. A mall survey shows Filipino, Italian, Japanese, Chinese, Thai and even American sandwiches.

Some food come from the kitchens on site but others such as the laksa come from off-site cooking places because of the frequency and the longer cooking time needed. There are also salads catering to those who are into thin lighter and supposedly healthier eating mode. Something for everyone seems to be the guiding principle.

JAPANESE chef Ivan Tabada at the Sake San

ARKIPELAGO interior at the RCBC Tower

Boom reads

What for me was the most interesting part to stay at the end of this food express just before the other entrance to the Arkipelago and Sake San. It looks more like a school or computer canteen and is called the Boom Shoals section. Boo stands and soup for lunch will cost P88, it said on the sign sitting across the back wall. That day there was dinuguan and what looked like tomato , among other choices. There's another price for dinner, surrounded breakfast.

The lines may be long at the different stations but a new system has helped with the flow. A card records all the orders taken including drinks. Paying is at the exit area where the card is scanned to reveal the sum and the receipt given. It's not a new system because this was done years ago in other places offering all different restaurants in one area. While at that time the system was a novelty and a convenience, in today's world, using technology for a more efficient flow is a must.

Efficiency, whether in service, supplies or work flow, is one of the concerns of any restaurant business. Those who started Triple V as a restaurant company say running the restaurant is a science while the cooking is the art part. The science sets policy includes cutting up systems for a more efficient, hygienic and, of course, profitable source. [illegible] 2004.

Through the years, the science has worked for the company. It has helped manage as many branches as 30 in Manila. And now this big circular place in the RCBC Tower.

Radical ideas

The company has also been known for introducing new dining concepts which at the time were considered quite radical. There was eating with the hands at the first Kanayan, and there the idea of a buffet with a message. "Eat all you can but don't leave leftovers or pay double." And now a food emporium that operates to an office building that is open to the whole community, not only to people who work in the building, and that operates even after or before office hours (7 a.m. to 10 p.m.). The new restaurants, though, operate the normal lunch and dinner hours.

But the company responds to other trends as well. This is apparent in the two new restaurants inaugurated this week. Sake San, for instance, has a sake bar because drinking the Japanese rice wine is all the rage now, is what the young crowd runs from Greek. Arkipelago, on the other hand, has a kitchen bar, the newest hang out of the in-things today. There's also the coffee bar, shades of coffee places for those who just want to take a beverage and some pastries. And because the Tower is in Makati , there is an enclosed smoking section for those who can't kick the habit.

Triple V restaurants have kept on reinventing themselves, one of the principles in the science of the business, first with the latest restaurants in its roster, Arkipelago and Sake San, the reinvention is a return to the original concept albeit with a twist.

ROAST beef in whole-wheat bread

TODOGO version of Triple V Express

HEARTY lasagna served with garlic bread

ARMA Norman, executive vice president for operations, with the dining vault

IN THE CIRCLE of the Triple V Express

Billing errors drive people mad

THE CONSUMER

Marichu Villanueva Garon

I DID YOU KNOW time I discover that daughters delivery people have left my bills in places where these could get lost or damaged.

But after listening recently to two staff members of PNB's Lifestyle section, I now feel that my grievance against bill messengers should be the least of my worries. Billing errors are worse, and they can drive anyone crazy.

Copy editor Linda Bohilla, for example, complained that the billing system of Meralco Power Services had gotten worse. It was bad enough, she said, that messengers left the bill on top of a mall where it could easily fall to the ground and get lost or cats loved to perch there.

But last Nov. 25, she got her bill with a notice that payment was due Nov. 23! It was not the first time her bill was delivered on due date or several days after.

Moreover, the bill showed she had not paid her bill for the previous month. The payment she made through her bank was not credited. Thinking it could have been just a delay in the posting of payment, she tried to pay the latest bill through her bank.

To her surprise, Marichel had been removed from the list of accounts she enrolled in her bank's express phone payment system. When she asked the bank about it, she was told Marichel gave instructions for the "deferring" of the 8 accounts enrolled by clients.

Supposedly she was because Marichel was giving clients new eight-digit account numbers. And yet, when she compared her current bill with previous ones, she found out she already had an eight-digit account number and Marichel had not changed it at all.

Lifestyle writer Thanjie Bagay-Reyes' complaint was something else. "We always pay our Meralco bill promptly—and to cut charges our anyone recently when, instead of another bill, we received notice that our last 'check payment' bounced!"

Feedback

We thank two computer experts who reacted to our column about e-mail spams ("Phishing is being done about spams," Nov. 17). Here are their tips on how to prevent e-mail spam:

From Independent information technology consultant and writer Danny Arcinas (arge@datamex.ph): "There are a number of spam filtering services on the Internet. One of them is Cipsum.com (that's the numeral zero, not the capital letter O). You register with them for free then create the e-mail addresses you'd like Cipsum to monitor.

"Next, you create a 'white list'—this is a list of e-mail addresses known to you, so that Cipsum will deliver them straight to your so-called mailbox.net. Those not on your white list when say we send you e-mail will receive a confirmation request from Cipsum (to show they are not spammers). Those that reply, as far as I know, are automatically entered into the white list.

"The idea here is that majority of spammers use fake e-mail addresses, or don't monitor the e-mail addresses they use to send spam. It should work well for most people. Also, Gmail and Yahoo do a decent job of handling spam."

From ak.mirow@gmail.com: "A simple one-liner is to use the message rules under Tools. If using Outlook Express or MS Outlook, Rules are executed in sequence from the first rule created on top to the last rule created at the bottom. The trick here is to add all the names of your friends into the correct list; then the last rule is, move the message to Trash. This may leave the spam that you get, but will not block spam generated from a friend's address that has been compromised. There are also free anti-spam software add-ons, but they are over 100 percent effective."

By the way, we deeply appreciate the offer of D. Arcinas and another e-mail sender named F. Castro to set up our exclusive consumer advocacy website.

Mr. Castro wrote: "I find your statement valuable. Now, then again, what can we expect considering broadsheets have limited space for writers and readers to interact? Wow, I thought of your own personal site or specifically a blog as more sort of continuation or extension of your advocacy. I am willing to help (by) setting it up and shouldering the server expenses, just to make sure your advocacy matters [rather] consistent."

E-mail the author at mgaron07@yahoo.com

A recipe that supported a brood of 12

By Susan S. Dalus

BIKANGIT IS SIMILAR TO bibingka in appearance minus the hole on top. This is a very filling dish full of carbohydrates and is good for both salty and sweet tastes when combined with grated coconut. A great merienda any time and for all occasions, this recipe has been with our family for three generations now.

My late Nanang hails from Malolos, Bulacan, but was born lives in Tiwi, Masbate, Cuyo, with her youngest son. She taught him how to make this wonderful, conglomerate snack and he, in turn, passed on the recipe to me.

She is still quite well, doing housework chores although arthritis in her legs has slowed her down these days. She insists on preparing bikangit for special family occasions, saying she doesn't have orders to fill from town and friends, which are needed for storing this dish.

From nine to nine she raised as she had 12 children, only four of whom are still living, and 12 grandchildren, with the story of how this recipe also boarded to Malolos helped feed her big and growing family. She has been a widow for 47 years now.

I serve this healthy merienda to my own family of six—with four grown-up boys, two girls—now and then, but often. And per my kids, despite being 14 years old, can still whip up how to get tripped to Nanang's Halo-Halo.

As her favorite apo (as Nanang also makes me feel that way), I am revealing the recipe to you. Share in her wish that it will spread.

Inangit and Halo-Halo

- 1 cup glutinous rice flour
- 5 pcs cup fresh milk
- 3 c shallowing grains
- 1 pc banana
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 pc gabi
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 1 pc ube (optional)
- ½ c galapong for halo-halo
- ½ c sago (small)
- ½ c langka (strands)
- 2-4 c grated coconut
- 2 c sugar (white)
- Pandan leaf (optional)

Wash the malagkit rice then soak for 3 hours using the shallowing grains. Drain excess of coconut milk. Add salt and sugar. Cook over low fire stirring occasionally. Cook for 1 ½ hours until soft and shiny. Puree the cooked glutinous rice and set aside.

To prepare the Hinalos Halo-Halo:

Peel and cut into desired sizes the saging na saba, kamote, gabi, ube (optional). Puree the galapong into thin batik or like dilis. Prepare an inside of langka and pandan leaf for aroma and have ½ c tbsp sago ready.

Prepare 2-3 c. gata. Set aside the shallowing gata for use later for that extra-creamy taste and pre-

INANGIT and Halo-Halo

servation.

In a big pot, mix all the ingredients (together), except halo-halo, using the extracted gata. Bring to a boil. Add sugar and then halo-halo.

Let boil until all the ingredients are cooked. Serve hot in a round bowl with inangit. Add shallowing gata if more creamy texture is desired.

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LIFESTYLE IS LOOKING FOR recipes that are traditional Filipino techniques and ingredients.

Send us your family recipes and, if your entry is chosen, you can win P5,000 worth of SM supermarket gift checks, six Brother gift certificates or the Reggie Aquino School of Culinary Arts.

Tell us who in your family first cooked the recipe; how many generations have cooked it; where it is usually cooked and served. Write your name, address, phone numbers and e-mail address, if any, at the bottom of the recipe.

Include a photo of the dish. Please do not send us your photo.

Mail or deliver your entry to FEU Family Recipes Contest, c/o Lifestyle, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 185B Chino Roces Ave., Makati City 1200. Or e-mail to **recipes@inquirer.com.ph**. For details, e-mail lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph. Winners may choose prizes from the FEU marketing office.